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**The Common Creed of
Christians**

The Common Creed of Christians

Studies of the Apostles' Creed

By

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To

*the People of the Brick Church, whose
generous appreciation is responsible
for the publication of these studies,
and whose loyalty is a continual
inspiration*

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Preface

THERE are many books on the Apostles' Creed. The only valid excuse for putting forth another is that many who have heard the words have asked for them in printed form, and that these studies view the symbol from an unusual angle.

This set of studies is concerned, not with the history of the Creed, or with its theological interpretation, or with a defence of its positions. It takes the Creed as a recognized part of the worship of the Christian Church, and attempts to set forth some of the practical implications of such a faith, to make more clear the sort of lives we would live if we actually believed what, in the Creed, we profess. Its aim and point of view are religious and practical, rather than historical or theological.

May the Spirit of the Living God speak through the ancient words to Christians facing new conditions and needing to find new power in the eternal Gospel of Christ Jesus our Lord.

W. P. M.

New York.

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I

“I Believe”

I

"I BELIEVE"

THE greatest service any one of us can render to the world just now is to live in the power of a Christian faith.

It is not enough to *have* a Christian faith, even if one believes in most orthodox fashion all that Christians ought to believe, or may believe. There have been Christians who thought that that was sufficient; there have been times in the history of the Church when the Church seemed to feel that the one vital necessity was to get men to accept a creed. But to *have* a Christian faith is worth no more than to have a weapon in time of riot. What counts is use, not mere possession. But, on the other hand, let us not forget that one cannot *use* either a weapon or a creed unless he *has* it, and knows something about the practical application of it. To have the faith of a Christian, and then to live by it, is one of the greatest privileges and opportunities life affords. Where can

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one find a greater? What is there in all the wide range of human thought and activity that is quite so sure to yield joy and power to its owner, and to produce rich and lasting effects in the lives of others and in the life of the world, as a Christian faith, lived out faithfully?

Back of us,—not very far back, perhaps,—lies a period in which Christians commonly knew what they believed. The need then was for emphasis on the *living out* of what they believed. Of course there is need to-day, and there always will be, for the same emphasis. It is vastly more important that you and I live by what we honestly believe to be true about God and life, than that we come to believe a great many more articles and facts about the life of the spirit. The man who knows just one thing about Jesus Christ, about God, about right living, and lives that faith in the flesh every day, is worth incomparably more than the man who is ready to declare his belief in all the articles of the most elaborate Christian creed, but sets his actual living on another platform.

Yet there is need to-day, as there was not in the past, for knowing *what* we believe, for clear and clean-cut thinking, for putting into our faith a positive intellectual content. There is too great a tendency to allow our faith to degenerate into a vague sense that there is something known as Christian truth, and that on the whole we accept it. Real Christianity has always been positive and clear, a religion of straight thinking. It is significant that when the fundamental law of religion, stated first in the Old Testament, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," emerges in the New Testament, it is with the added phrase, "and with all thy mind." There may be forms of religion which demand that one cease thinking when he enters the temple, but true Christianity is not, cannot be, such a religion. Christianity calls us to serve God and man on the basis of clear thoughts and convictions about God and man and life. Modern thought, as we call it, the marvel of scientific advance, the sweep of man's knowledge through universal realms of fact and law,

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all this owes more to Jesus Christ than to any other leader, for He set men's minds free, and called them to fearless thinking.

It is therefore a vital matter for Christians to-day that they know what they believe, and then live by that faith.

What do Christians believe? What are the essential and vital articles of a Christian faith? It is not easy to answer. We are Protestants, and we guard jealously the right of every soul to think and form judgments for itself. Nowhere in the world is there any authority which can dictate to the individual Christian precisely what he shall or shall not believe. Every one of us must do his own thinking in the sight of God, and must some day give account to God for the way he has used that privilege and duty.

Yet, after all, Christian faith is a common possession. There are great beliefs which all Christians share, without which the Church would cease to be a real body of Christ. If we are to talk about Christian faith at all, we must use some common statement of that faith. In trying to make more clear what, as Christians,

we ought to believe, and do believe, and what difference such faith ought to make, I take the greatest and simplest common statement of the Christian faith. We call it "The Apostles' Creed," though it took shape many centuries after the time of the Apostles. It stands for the Christian faith as no other form of words does, or can. It may not represent exactly what you believe, or what I believe, or what any particular individual in the Christian Church believes; but it comes as near as any form of words we can find to representing the common convictions of Christians.

Strongly convinced that we need to know what Christian faith is, and what it would mean, and should mean, to live in the strength of it just now, we shall take up, one by one, the great articles of the Christian faith as here simply stated, and ask,—not so much what proof there is for them, or why we should believe them, as the more vital question, what difference ought it to make in our lives really to *believe* this particular item of the Creed of the Christian Church? What sort of lives will we live in the sight of men and in the presence

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of the Living God if we genuinely believe in God the Father Almighty, in Jesus Christ as His Son and our Lord, in the Holy Spirit, in the Church, in the forgiveness of sins, in immortality? We *ought to be different* from other people, if we believe those great realities and they do not, so different that no one could fail to *see* the contrast. There lies the real trouble the world outside has over our creeds, the only fact that makes a creed like this a stumbling-block. We hear a great deal about the way our creeds operate to keep people away from the Church. Some very earnest people have urged that we should do away with the use of the Apostles' Creed in our worship, on the ground that its use keeps some people from coming heartily into our fellowship. Friends, what keeps people away, or makes of the Creed a deterrent influence, is not the use of the Creed, but its misuse, and its non-use, most of all its non-use. If after repeating the Creed on Sunday we made use of it all the week, if you and I and all who say the Creed went out and all the week long lived as if we held these things to be true, the Creed would

draw all earnest men and women to the Church and its worship. What hurts them is not that we say it, but that we say it and then live as if we did not mean it.

Before taking up the great affirmations of the Creed, one by one, I would say something about the Creed as a whole, our attitude toward it, what it means as we use it in our worship, what it implies to rise and repeat it with the congregation. There seems to be an amount of misunderstanding on this subject which can almost be called vast. The misuse of the Creed, as I have called it, causes trouble for many honest souls, and makes what might be for all of us one of the most solemn and helpful and strengthening parts of our worship a source of discomfort to some, raising every Sunday a question as to our honesty and candour in repeating these words.

What does it involve and imply when we say the Creed?

If the repetition of it each Sunday morning implied that each individual present is required to rise and repeat this precise form of words as the exact and sufficient statement of

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what he personally and privately believes, then the public recital of the Creed would be an intolerable practice, like dragging out chains and fetters with which to threaten God's free sons and daughters. Moreover, that sort of use of a creed would be an impertinence in our common worship of God. Why should one and another and another of us get up in the midst of our common worship of God, our enjoyment of the common elements of a Christian experience, and declare what we personally and privately believe? The fact is that in our Protestant churches we have put such an emphasis on private and individual belief that our point of view has become warped and diseased. We have almost lost the great and noble power of merging private convictions in the sweep of a great common feeling and purpose and statement. If any one has thought his way with care and prayer to a definite set of beliefs which are quite out of harmony with the major declarations of the Apostles' Creed, we ought to honour him for quiet refusal to say the words. Let him be silent during that part of the service. But the man who will not

join in this—the only great common statement we can use effectively,—because somewhere in it are incidental phrases or words or ideas which do not form a part of his personal creed, has a religion that needs to be operated on for enlargement of the ego. We must respect the desire to be rigidly honest, but we cannot fail to wonder at the spirit that feels it more important to emphasize one's own private convictions than to lose one's self in a common act of worship.

The Church itself is largely to blame, because it has so frequently, so all-but-invariably, used creeds as tests, probing men with them to see if they accept their statements in all their implications. I want to say, as clearly and incisively as words can put it, that when any one joins in repeating the Apostles' Creed as a part of the service of a church, he is not submitting to a theological test; he is taking part in an act of worship. We all stand together and recite together the common statement of Christian faith; not, I repeat, as a statement of exactly what I believe, or exactly what you believe; but as a statement of what Christians in general

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stand for, what the great convictions are on which the Church is built, and round which common Christian experience centers and grows. The recitation of the Creed, in any congregation, might well be prefaced with the prayer, "Lord, increase our faith," and followed with the petition, "Lord, we believe; help Thou our unbelief." We recite it together as the best practical statement of the convictions on which the Christian Church and the Christian life are founded, a faith in which we share, a faith we would desire to have fully as our own; not an iron test to which we submit, a Procrustes' bed to rack or lop our individual convictions to a prescribed measure. We say it seriously, but not slavishly; freely, but not frivolously; we say it recognizing that faith is not only the precious achievement of an individual soul; it is also the common heritage of organized Christianity; and in our worship we rejoice to give expression to that common heritage of great convictions.

The Creed does not come breaking into our worship with a statement of theological opinion. It is part of our worship, to be used with

the same freedom and the same adjustment of individual experience to common thought and practice that we use when we pray or sing or engage in other acts of worship. The prayer, though voiced by one man, is an act of common worship; you join in it with real and unclouded devotion, even if it does not always represent exactly your personal feelings and judgments. There are comparatively few of the Psalms which do not contain here or there a phrase which clashes, or at least fails to agree, with what some Christian present believes or feels, living as he does in the greater and fuller light of the Gospel. I pity him if he cannot join in the responsive reading of the Psalter without being haunted all through by the fear that he may possibly join in some statement which does not reflect his individual religious experience. Suppose we made tests of our hymns, as some do of the Creed! What havoc it would make of our attempts at worship! No one could join in singing our national hymn who had come here from another land, no matter how loyal an American he might have become, for he could not honestly sing, "Land

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where my fathers died." We might even refuse to admit the real Americanism of any one whose eyesight was so poor that he could not see the Stars and Stripes in the dawn's early light!

There is no doubt a certain sense of satisfied honesty felt by those who conscientiously refrain from singing certain stanzas or lines of a hymn, because they do not personally share the sentiments there set forth. Honesty and candour are noble qualities, and we must honour those who remain silent rather than join in what they cannot truly indorse. But there is something glorious also, valuable, wonderful, in common expression of thought, feeling, or purpose; and when one is engaging in such common expressions, through prayer, or hymn, or creed, he should gladly and freely go to the furthest limit consistent with honour in subordinating private views to united expression of common thoughts and convictions.

It is a great thing to be reminded, each Sunday as we meet, that the Christian Church is not a mere amiable movement, a vague benevolent association; that it is a union of men and

women who, while free to think for themselves, and encouraging each other in the exercise of that freedom, do yet unitedly stand for certain great positive facts and convictions, which the Church is set to preach, to teach, and to honour; and that every individual Christian is, freely, joyously, to live as one ought to live who shares those great convictions.

The Apostles' Creed may not be what you would write if you should set forth your actual beliefs; but what you would write would not express the convictions of other men. The Apostles' Creed may not be what the Church of to-day would put forth, if it met, free from all traditions and inheritances and influences of the past, to frame the faith in which it lives just now. But it comes nearer than any creed any body of Christians could possibly frame to-day to providing a general statement which all sorts of Christians can agree to use without putting too great a strain on their private and personal beliefs. There is tremendous value, value we Protestants are too apt to ignore, in the use of a statement of common conviction that links the parts of the Church of to-day to

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one another and the whole Church of to-day to the Church of past ages. You and I are sure that it is better to be a Protestant than to be a Catholic; but best of all is to be a Catholic-spirited Protestant.

There is need at this time, painful need, one would say, were it not so glorious an opportunity it sets before us, that Christianity should stand before the world, that the Church should stand, that Christians should stand, for certain great, simple, positive, concrete beliefs. We need an intellectual basis for religion;—a theology, if you want to call it that. The word “Christian” has almost come to stand for anything we approve. It must come to stand for a Gospel faith that is definite enough to put strength and zest and joy into the business of living. I do not plead for elaborate creeds, or for putting emphasis on little points of doctrine, or for insisting on theological small change. God forbid! It is the big, simple, common, universal elements of the Christian faith for which Christians and the Church must stand; but we must know what they are, and stand for them, and live by them, that

Christianity may become far more distinctive than it has been of late years. What we must do is to make the world see that it makes a difference to be a Christian.

And what are the great essentials of Christian belief, if they be not these that find statement in the common Creed of the Church; not particular implications or interpretations of them; not minor phrases or words; but the great underlying realities which these ancient words struggle to set forth. It is true that a large part of the actual wording of the Creed is taken up with what we may call a parenthesis, which interrupts the statement of present conviction to state certain opinions about past facts and future expectations. But that parenthesis, though it bulks large in the *form* of the Creed, is a very small part of its expression of essential Christian faith, an incidental rather than a vital part. That is why and where many stumble. That our Lord Jesus Christ was born of a certain woman, whose name is given, and was put to death under a certain Roman governor, whose name is also given, seemed important enough to those who framed

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the Creed to be given a place in its declarations. Those facts seem important to Christians now. But they are not the great, vital convictions on which Christianity is founded, the essential articles of a living Christian faith. The very form of the Creed recognizes the difference, for when it reaches this parenthesis it changes from "I believe" to narrative words, "Who was," "He descended," "He shall come," as if it stopped for a moment to offer explanations as to who this Son of God and Lord of men is, and then starts once more with its mighty affirmations, "I *believe* in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church." Again, were you and I, and thoughtful Christians of this age, framing a creed, we would probably not say, "I believe in the resurrection *of the body*." But that is a mere survival of form; we do believe, if we are real, hearty, vital Christians, in that which underlies those words, in a positive, personal, real life to come.

Taken with the freedom with which the Christian has the right and the duty to take all things, "the freedom with which Christ has made us free," this ancient Creed is a great,

strong, noble expression of the vital truths on which the whole structure of Christianity and of the Christian Church rests, the best, the only practical statement of our common faith. A Christian ought to take its words upon his lips with joy. One has a defective Christian experience who does not believe, or at least *wish* to believe, definitely, strongly, really, in God our Father, in Christ our Lord, in the Holy Spirit, in the one Christian Church, in the forgiveness of sins, and in life eternal. It is good for the Church, as a body, to rise and say, "This is what we stand for."

What would it not mean, of vigour, of joy, of influence to share these mighty Christian convictions? We shall try to see some of the clear, strong, simple implications of such a faith, what it would mean if we actually went into the world *really believing* any one of these great Christian affirmations.

To have a Christian faith, and to live by it every day, that is the wonderful mission to which every one of us is called. Is there any better resolve, any higher purpose, we can set before ourselves at this time, any prayer

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we may more fervently offer, than that we may always, each in his own life, and all in our common united service, so live out the great central convictions of the Christian faith, that men shall see in us the power and glory of a Christian faith, and that, as we rise and repeat the Creed from Sunday to Sunday, we shall have the glad consciousness that we are not merely uttering words which we deny or forget daily in our lives, but are setting forth with joy the faith in which we live our life in the flesh, the faith which makes us Christians, the faith in which alone the world can find the secret of a safe and happy life, the faith which always has been, and ever shall be, the only secret of victory for the people of God. "Lord, we believe! Help Thou our unbelief!" God make and keep us faithful to the faith once delivered to the saints, the eternal spirit that breathes and speaks through these simple, ancient words.

II

“I Believe in God the Father Al-
mighty, Maker of Heaven
and Earth”

II

“I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER
ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN
AND EARTH ”

THERE is no statement of belief in which Christian people everywhere, and of every sort, would more heartily join; and many who would hesitate to call themselves Christians would confess their faith in God the Father.

Yet, ready as all are to own this as their faith, we cannot deny that it would work a revolution in religion and in common life, should all church members live by that faith, showing by their deeds and their spirit that this first article of the Christian Creed is not a mere form of words, but the bread of life by which their souls are nourished. What would it make, of your life and mine, and of the life of the world, if we really *believed* that the Maker of our life is our Father?

It is one of the great needs of this day that

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men and women should really believe that. We talk of the need of a revival of faith in the Bible, in the Sabbath, in this and that particular doctrine or fact. But the need of the time goes far deeper than any matter of special doctrine or practice. Men need to believe in God. Is there any God at all? Back of the phenomena of life is there a power that can, in any real sense, be called friendly, parental, loving? Am I a cog in a machine, or a child in a home? Some one has well said that this is the deepest and most significant of all questions, "Is the universe friendly?" To put it in a slightly different way, Is the heart of things like the heart of a tree or like the heart of a man? Does God care?

Christian faith is the faith that God does care, that He is our great Friend, our Father; that human love, at its best, is as near as we can come to a symbol of what God, the Lord of all and the life of all, is. Christian faith is the conviction that God is the Father, Almighty, Maker of all things.

Two great affirmations are combined here, which have not always been held together,

which cannot easily be held firmly together, especially in the light of the thinking of this age. There are many who have believed that God is the Almighty, a conviction set forth in Herbert Spencer's noble phrase, "An Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed." Others have believed in a Father Who is not Almighty, Maker of some things but not of others, a struggling God, a sympathetic God, a humane Being, afflicted in all our affliction, fighting by our side, working with us and in us, an Invisible King and Captain, Who seems to be baffled often, to go through defeat at times toward His great ends, back of whom stands a Veiled Being, a Fate, the Unknowable, the Almighty. Mr. H. G. Wells has given vogue to this conception recently, popularizing what Henri Bergson had set forth to the thoughtful.

It is exceedingly important that we realize just now that Christian faith holds to both elements. It follows both Spencer and Bergson in their great affirmations, without accepting their denials. God is both Almighty and the Father; Ruler of all and Friend of each; in-

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finitely above us yet marvellously within us; wielding all power, yet Comrade in our fighting and struggling; omnipotent, yet trusting chiefly not in power but in love for the working out of His will; an omnipotence that is patient, restrained, personal, willing to wait, to work, to suffer; more like man than like anything else man knows; yet the one source of all the energy, the life, the force, man knows, radiant fountain of inexhaustible power, yet working ever with the delicacy of an artist and the sensitiveness of a lover.

It is just as vital that we Christians of to-day hold together in one firm faith these two elements, the Almightyness and the Fatherhood, as it was for Athanasius and his fellows to hold together the fact of God's Unity and the fact of His rich revelation in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If the Church, and the believers in it, and the thoughts of men about God, are to steer straight and clear through the confusing currents of present-day reasoning and speculation, Christians must believe with clear and honest conviction in God the Father Almighty.

The hardest practical problem just now is how to defend the faith that God, the Almighty Life and Ruler of all things, is our Father. There is a vast multitude of dazed men and women in the world just now, whose faith in eternal goodness has been hard hit by the vision of fundamental evil projected by the facts of the war. To many of them the problem has come very near; personal affection and thwarted hope are tangled with it in a way that makes dispassionate thought impossible. We who are Christians must know how to set before this suffering world a splendid faith, strong in its saving power, in the Fatherhood, the loving and eternal goodness, of our God. There are statements we can make, facts we can set forth, which will help darkened minds toward the light, and give a glimmer of hope to suffering souls. We can see clearly for ourselves, and make clear to others, such truths as these,—too easily overlooked in the rush of tragic events:—This is no new problem. Human life has never been easy and pleasant for the mass of men. It has been largely characterized by struggle, contention, sorrow, and

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pain. If men in the past have been sustained by a faith in the loving-kindness of God, their faith is not due to the easy lives they led. On the contrary, it is precisely the hard-used lives, the victims of cruel misfortune, who have given to us the most triumphant settings of a deathless faith in the goodness of God and of life. Christ, the Supreme Teacher and Leader of the religion of Fatherhood, Who dared to say "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," sent out the light of His unquenchable faith from the darkness of betrayal and crucifixion. If we of this generation have been hard hit by the cruel facts of the war, that is chiefly due to the easy comfort and good-nature which had characterized the lives of the favoured folk for some decades before the storm broke. Our age, our problems, our doubts, are not exceptional.

Moreover, we can see, and make others see, that this particular evil of the war, crushing and terrible as it is, is not due to the will of God, but to the perverted wills of men. If any reasonable men, Christian believers or not, should be faced with the question, "Would the

war have come, had those professing to be Christians, from the time of Christ on, done what they clearly knew to be the will of God as revealed in Christ?" the answer would be a unanimous "No." Nothing can be clearer than that this particular calamity came through the disobedience and disbelief of men in the plain will of God. The ancient lament sounds like the cry of eternal Love, brooding over the misery of the present time: "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; then had thy peace been as a river."

It is clear also, as we look back over the history of men's thoughts and beliefs, that the greatest spiritual advances have come out of suffering and struggle. What is the Old Testament but a setting forth of the price men paid for coming to know the great truths of God? And what is the New Testament but the carrying on to a climax that mighty development of truth revealed through pain and struggle, until a cross becomes the symbol of our deepest knowledge of the relation between God and man?

These things we can say, and with them we

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can help the souls of those who feel that, in the face of the facts, God cannot be a loving Father. But far beyond all that we can say, all facts and arguments we can set forth, is the influence Christians can have just through *living*, plainly, obviously, strongly, joyously, every day in the manifest power of a faith in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,—a faith founded on our own natures, on the fact that love is the supreme glory of life, on the unquestionable power of faith in the life of man, on the mighty, marvelous, undying fire of love in the life of men and nations and races and groups; on Jesus Christ, the Revealer of God, setting Him forth in terms of indubitable loving-kindness,—a faith that makes our lives so strong, so bright, so sure, that all who know us will feel it and be drawn toward the source and object of it.

Have we ever begun to take in the rich implications that lie hidden in that word “Maker,”—“Maker of heaven and earth”? “Heaven and earth” means all things, the universe in which we live and of which we are a part. The energy from which all this has

come, and from which it comes every day, is our Father.

It is a satisfaction and a joy that the Creed says "Maker" rather than "Creator." Somehow, when we speak of "Creation," our thoughts hark back to the beginning of things, a dim and distant day when God set the world a-going. It may be that that is what was in the minds of the men who first framed this Creed, as they said "Maker of heaven and earth"; that they were echoing the thought in the fourth Commandment, "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth." But that is not what you and I mean by the phrase, in the light of modern knowledge and thinking. Say what one will of the "good old days," and of the superior power and value of the old religion and the old theology, there are certain ways of thinking about God in the more modern philosophy which are priceless in value, a veritable emancipation of the soul; and one of the most glorious of these is the sense of God not as having made the world some time ago, but as ever-making it, in the process of making it now, not a First Cause, but an

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ever-present life. That one vivid conception of God as present, active, right in the middle of His work, is a glorious characteristic of the present-day way of thinking about religion. Over against the ancient thought of a God who made the world in six days, long, long ago, we rejoice to set the word of the One Who knew God best, "My Father worketh, even until now"; and when we say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," we have in mind as object of our faith not a God who put forth a finished product in six days; but the God Who has been making the heavens and the earth for sixty centuries, or six thousand centuries, and may go on with that work for millions of years to come, for all we know. All we know is that He never finished the work, never turned away saying, "Now the world is made," but is still busy making new heavens and a new earth, new every day, new every age; building His city, all the time, a city like that of which Tennyson tells, "Built to music, therefore never built at all, and therefore built forever." When I confess my faith in God the "Maker" of

heaven and earth, I mean that He made and makes the sun and the air, the food that I eat, the life I live, gives me my work to be done, that He *makes* each day for me and for all; so believing, I ought to rise each day and say, "This is a day which the Lord hath made."

A friend told me recently of a conversation he had had with a young man of what we may call the extreme modern scientific type. The young man expressed his doubts as to one after another of the articles and objects of Christian faith, until his friend asked, "But you believe in God, do you not?" "Oh, yes," he answered, "I believe in some great power that made the world at the start, and set it going." Such a faith is worth something, but what a poor, pitiful faith it is that looks through this rich, wonderful, glorious living universe, and finds God only at some dim and remote point, a necessary figure to start things. Worth ten thousand times more is the faith of the man who says, "Whatever took place in the past, however the world got started, I believe that life as it comes throbbing about me to-day is

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made by an Almighty Father, that love, personality, is the supreme force in the world that is, and in which I must play my part." That is the sort of faith that makes a difference, the faith that means power and joy.

What would it mean, simply and specifically, to live in and by such a faith? It would mean so much that with our best effort we can state but a fragment of its meaning; something so radiant that we can give but a gleam of its light.

If you and I should live all the time as men and women who genuinely and fully believed in "God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," what sort of lives would we live, what spirit would we reveal?

We would be cheerful and brave in facing life, its tasks, burdens, problems, cares, and obligations. Is not that the first and most obvious fruit of such a faith? If all that comes to me comes out of loving-kindness, if my life as it unfolds every day is simply the best that Almighty Love can arrange for me, consistently with His care for all other men, and for the outworking of His vast, far-reaching plans

for the final triumph of love over blind force, how can I help singing on my way? I shall be saying with Paul, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" and singing with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." I shall be strong and unconquerable in facing all difficulties, with a spirit that cannot be daunted, because my heart is held steady in the assurance that "all things work together for good to them that love God," and that "nothing can separate us from the love of God." Is not that the sort of life I shall live, the sort of spirit that must be in me, if I honestly *believe* that Almighty Love is the maker of all things, including me and my life, and the whole confused, strange mass of things amid which we move to-day?

Such a faith will surely make one hopeful for the world at large. It is not easy to be an optimist just now. Of course there is a sort of optimism, an easy, careless drifting assumption that everything and every one is as good as can be, of which we may well be glad to be rid, even at the cost of some pain. But there is a stalwart, sensible, open-eyed optimism, or

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meliorism, if you prefer, which is the very breath of life for human society. The world sorely needs men and women to-day who look out upon the facts of human society with an unquenchable hopefulness, serenely sure that, though humanity be dragged through the depths, it will some time come out on the heights and in the light. And who can supply that need, if not we who every Sunday rise and say we believe that this world is being made by Almighty Fatherhood? A man who has grown old in the service of God, who now is practically laid aside from active work, who in age, in circumstances, in all the make-up of his personal life, is just where men find it easiest to be pessimistic in spirit and outlook, wrote a few days ago, "What times these are in which to be living! I pity those who hear only the crash of falling walls, and see only the decay of ancient structures, and cannot discern the rising walls of the Kingdom of God." Can any one put a price-mark on that sort of faith? And that is what ought to be in every one who holds the first article of the Christian Creed, what *will* be in every one who honestly

faces life in the power of a conviction that it is being made by Almighty Love.

This also such faith will mean,—an eager coöperation in what God is doing. The God in Whom we believe is One Who has a tremendous, fascinating, ever-growing, never-finished work to be done. He is making the heavens and the earth what they ought to be. He is pushing on, driving on, toward a world ever better, ever fairer, ever more worthy of God and man. If I believe that, how can I keep my hands from taking hold, my mind from the fascination of knowing what He has in mind, my whole life from giving itself to His work? I shall say, as the Master said, “My Father worketh even until now, *and I work.*” He is making things; I want to help make them. If we are His children, then we are, as Paul said, “heirs of God”; and if we are honourable in soul we cannot help looking on this world with something of that sense of personal responsibility which the heir of a fine old estate feels. We want to live in it, to work in it, to be worthy of it.

All this and vastly more it will mean to us,

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if we genuinely believe in “God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,” and live by that faith now in the flesh. What a wonderful life it is, that for which God made us, the life of faith in His goodness,—in the face of the facts, of all the facts, not shutting our eyes, nor calling evil good, nor painting a smooth covering over festering places, but in and through it all believing that God is love, and that life, as a whole, was made for us in the beginning, and is made for us each day anew, by our Father, our Friend, that the Eternal Energy from which all things proceed is the Eternal Goodness in whom our hearts find rest and strength and joy. It is our glorious privilege not only to hold that faith, and to repeat it as an act of worship; but to live in the power of it, to prove it by plainly showing, each of us in his own experience, and all of us in the common life of the Christian community, that it makes for a happy, useful, strong, brave life to believe that the maker of life is our Father.

“I say to thee, 'do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet
In lane, highway, or open street—

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That he and we and all men move
Under a canopy of love,
As broad as the blue sky above.

And one thing further make him know,
That to believe these things are so,
This firm faith never to forego,

Despite of all that seems at strife
With blessing, all with curses rife,
That this *is* blessing, this *is* life."

III

“I Believe in Jesus Christ, His Only
Son, Our Lord”

III

“I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS
ONLY SON, OUR LORD”

THE foundation of *all* true religion is faith in God. But that which gives to Christianity its distinctive flavour is faith in Jesus Christ. We believe in God; and we believe *also* in *Him*. That marks us as Christians.

The foundation is the supremely important matter, for a religion, as for a building. But the foundation is not what gives character, or distinction, either to a building or to a creed. Every one who has a true and vital religious experience believes in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. But the Christian goes further. He believes in “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”; and all his faith in God takes on new meaning for coming to Him through Jesus Christ His Son, our Lord.

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It is a very precious faith then, this that finds expression in the second article of the Creed of the Christian Church. It is not strange that the bulk of the Creed is taken up with a section dealing with our thoughts about Jesus Christ. In our English version there are sixty-nine words on this matter to forty on all others combined.

True, this section is largely made up of what we have already spoken of as a "parenthesis," which defines Christ, or states certain facts about Him as a historical character. The emphasis on these facts, the amount of space given to precise and detailed statement of them, are largely due to exigencies of the period when the Creed was taking shape. We note, as I have said at another time, that this section is set in the Creed in a different form from that given to the remainder. It says, not "I believe that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost" and so on, but, "Who was." It is perfectly obvious also that this section deals not with convictions about living realities, but with opinions about past historical events. It can never be an *essential* part of the faith by which a man,

or a church, *lives*, that certain things did or did not happen in the past. Our living faith has to do only with present, living realities. Yet it is true that past facts, and convictions about them, do have great influence over present living, and therefore this section which tells what Christians think about Jesus Christ has its value. It reminds us that our religion has its roots in reality. It is not the product of the thoughts or dreams of men. It came out of a life, a part of history. It centers in a man, born of a woman whose name we know, put to death under a Roman Governor whose name we know. It is of real value that, whenever we repeat the Creed, we thus remind ourselves that our Master was a real man, whose life was a part of human history. It is of interest that so much emphasis is put on the reality of His death. "He was *crucified, dead, and buried,*" we say; and then we add another phrase descriptive of burial, "*He descended into hell,*" which originally meant just what "buried" means,—that He went into Hades, the grave, the underworld, the place where it was thought that departed spirits go. Over

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and over we thus remind ourselves that His death was a fact. His resurrection was no resuscitation, but a newness of life. There, at least, in the truth of His resurrection, is a past fact which lives and works to-day as a vital truth. That He rose, and lives now, so that we adore and follow not a dead hero, but a Living Lord, is close to the heart of a real and living Christian faith.

Let this section mean to us then when we repeat the Creed, that our religion is solidly grounded, a part of human history, woven into human life, built on One Who came, lived, and died as men do, and lived on in the eternal world as we believe men may and will. The proportions of the Creed are justified; our knowledge of and faith in Jesus Christ may well bulk as large in our religion as the part relating to Him bulks in the Creed of the Church.

But the kernel of our faith in Christ is in that first clause, "and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord." There is stated the central conviction that Jesus had a special relation to God and to man. "*His Son, our Lord*

One word in that sentence proves a stumbling-block to some. I confess that I would count the Creed better without that word "only," "His *only* Son." A thoughtful boy once put to me the question, when we were talking about the Creed, and had come to this sentence, "But aren't we *all* God's children?" There is, of course, a meaning and a value in the presence of that word "only" if we do not press it into an over-emphasis that shall set Jesus out of our real human fellowship. He does stand alone. He out of all the heroes and leaders of men, is in a unique sense God's representative, God's Chosen, God's Anointed. In that sense we can say, "His only Son." But we must never say it in a way that shall weaken or ignore that other great truth that we are children of God in and with Him; "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ"; "Bringing many sons unto glory"; "that He might be the first born among many brethren." It was that side, of His oneness with us, of our full fellowship with Him in His life with God, on which our Lord Himself was always putting the emphasis. In all the Gospels I do not

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know of a single saying of Christ in which we can say, without qualification that He speaks of His relation with the Father as one in which His followers do not and cannot share.

What does it mean to believe "in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord"?

It means first of all that we look to Jesus to see what God is; and we find our hearts agreeing to His great saying, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

What is God? How are we to think of Him? Where are we to find Him? We know that He is everywhere, and in all things; and we learn something of Him when we learn the truth about anything that is. This universe, all of it, is the revelation of God, His interpretation, His self-expression. In order to know God fully, one would have to know the whole truth about everything that exists, in the world of facts, the world of values, the world of the spirit.

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills, and the plains,—
Are not these, O soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?"

Something of God is revealed to us in the crystal, something of order, beauty, symmetry. More of God is revealed to us in the plant, the flower, the tree, the fruit, for *life* has there come to self-expression. Far more of God is revealed in the animal world, where we mark the faint but wonderful rudiments of intelligence, of self-determination, of affection. Infinitely more of God is revealed to us in humanity, where the sense of right dawns clear, where conscience speaks, where love becomes a spiritual flame, where choice leads to nobility, and reason becomes constructive, and the true glory of the soul begins to shine forth. More and more we see what God is as we mount up the scale of being. Then comes One who is what men know they ought to be, what the truest of men want to be, what life has been trying to become, One in Whom conscience, and love, and wisdom are like pure, untainted flames of spiritual life. And we bow before Him, and say, "Here is the Son of God, Who shows us what all God's world has been striving to show, Who sets forth as we see it nowhere else *what God really is.*"

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Something like that is what we mean when we say we believe in Jesus Christ, His Son. Something like that is what we mean when we say we believe in the Divinity of Christ. The Church has tried to push its definitions further, but often has succeeded only in reaching that condition so graphically characterized by Huxley, in which "words take the place of ideas." One of the most harmful mistakes in our religious thinking, all down the ages, has been the persistent tendency to take hold of the great truth of the Divinity of our Lord by the wrong end. We have taken it to mean that Jesus is like God, whereas it means that God is like Jesus. We have concerned ourselves with defending the deity of Christ, instead of rejoicing in the Christliness of the Deity. We have said of our Master, "He is the Son of God, and therefore all I have thought and believed about God must be true of Him." We should have said, "He is Son of God, and therefore all that I have thought and believed about God should be revised and corrected in the plain light of what He was and is." How foolish a student would be, who, given an equation

where x , an unknown quantity, equals a plus b plus c , the values of which may be known, should at once go to work to interpret a plus b plus c in terms of x ! In the equation of Christian theology, *God* is the unknown quantity, Jesus Christ is the One whose values and meanings we can understand. Really to believe in the divinity of Christ, in a way to make such faith vital in its power and value, is to take that man, Christ Jesus, as the highest, surest, and most authoritative interpretation and forth-setting of what God is, so that we say, with glad confidence, "Great and unfathomable as is the mystery of God the Father Almighty, I am sure that everywhere and always He is like Jesus, and I come to Him most truly and most nearly when I come to Him through Jesus Christ His Son."

It is a stupendous assertion,—that the supreme revelation of God is to be found in that single human life. If any one asks why we believe this about Jesus, we can answer only that He convinces us as we come to know Him; and that through the ages that faith has justified itself by its results in the soul of man and

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the life of the world. His majesty and meekness, so uniquely blent; His place and power in history; His freedom from flaw, coupled with perfect humility; the universality of His appeal, to men and women, Anglo-Saxons and Asiatics and Africans, all sorts and conditions; these are but hints of what we find in Him apart from all others, as the supreme and satisfying revelation of what God really is.

After all, through the whole range of this universe, there are just two great realities, or sets of realities, that we know. We must interpret God in terms of the one or of the other. They are matter and spirit, or the impersonal and the personal. It is truer, our hearts know that it is, to interpret God in terms of spirit and personality, than in terms of matter and mechanics. We sink to a lower level when we call God "It," rather than "He." And the supreme person must be the best revelation of God's inmost nature. For many who have come to appreciate, through modern scientific study, the vastness of the facts and forces of the world, the face of a Friendly Father has seemed to disappear. But when we catch sight

of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,"

"That one face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose;
Becomes my universe, that feels and knows."

Jesus Christ is the Saviour of those who have lost their God among the stars.

But Christian faith in Jesus Christ means something more also; we believe in Him not only as God's Son, but as our Lord.

He means something real, vital, glorious, in the outworking of man's life, no less than in the self-revelation of God. Along with this sublime and beautiful process in which God has been revealing Himself more and more in the advance of life from stage to stage, has gone on a struggle in the soul of man to climb higher, to realize himself, to find God and the true meaning and worth of life. This process also finds its climax, its crown in Jesus Christ our Lord, in Whom manhood came to itself, to Whom we look when we would know what we really are, and what we might and should be. He is to man what He is to God, the supreme,

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authoritative revelation and forthsetting of the truth. He is not all of man, nor is He all of God, but all men find themselves in Him, as all of God is found in Him. He is what God is, and what man might be. As the two carbons in an electric arc approach until they touch, and a radiant light bursts forth from the contact, so the self-expression of God through the creation, and the self-realization of man through his life-struggle, draw together and meet in the one life, Son of God, our Lord, light of the world.

Words are poor things in which to set forth the richness of a faith in Christ. It is the most wonderful possession in the world, to believe in God, and also in Him. What difference will it make, what difference ought it to make, in our living, working conduct, to believe in "Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord"?

It will make a difference in our idea of God, and therefore in our conception of life. Life must look different to one who actually believes that God, the Father, the Maker of our life and of all things, is everywhere and always like Jesus. Unworthy thoughts of God, dread of

His vastness and vagueness, fear of His crushing power, the baffled sense of something unapproachable and unknowable, the whole brood of doubts and fears that hang like thick clouds about our sense of His immensity, melt away, and we find ourselves in the presence of love, friendliness, Fatherhood, personality, when we see Him in Jesus Christ. One of the tremendous needs of the world is the need of a Christian conception of God. Men have done in the name of God, they still do, what they never could do in the name of Jesus Christ. If our praying, our social intercourse, our whole scheme of thinking, feeling, and living, were based on an unshakable conviction that God is just like the Master we read of in the Gospel, would we not live a life at once more human and more godly, more simple and more high, more helpful to others and more glad at heart?

To believe thus really in Jesus Christ *our Lord* would mean also that we would exalt Him and His Gospel and His teachings and ideals above all other standards and laws and authorities.

We say we do that. We write into our

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creeds the statement that Jesus Christ is the great Head of the Church. We call Him King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. But over all our life hovers the echo of His reproach, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" If we genuinely made Him and His Gospel authoritative in the life of the Church, so that no other opinion could stand against His judgment, so that His tests would be ours, so that no doctrines could be held as essential which He does not clearly count vital, we simply could not hold back the Church from a real unity, and from a speedy victory over all the world's forces. We have considered precious certain matters about which He cared nothing, and have slighted what He thought of supreme importance. It is the plain fact that large sections of the Christian Church still put great stress on doctrines and practices and forms of administration which simply have no place anywhere in the Gospel, of which, so far as we know, our Lord Jesus Christ never spoke, and for which He cared nothing. Most of the matters about which good men dispute, the questions that dis-

tract the Church, and lead to divisive controversy, are matters about which Christ never said a word, or else spoke of them only to show that He held them to be of secondary importance. What are the subjects on which the Church has divided, or held apart, in recent years? Three of them stand out conspicuously:—*Apostolical succession*, the question whether we can have a valid church without episcopal ordination; the *inerrancy of the Bible*, the question whether every statement in it is literally true; the *virgin birth of our Lord Himself*; the question whether this is a statement of literal fact, or a symbolical and imaginative setting of the truth; these have been the storm-centers of recent ecclesiastical history. And our Lord Jesus Christ never mentions one of them! By all means let us hold to them, if we believe them to be true; by all means let us try to win other people to believe them, if they mean much to us. But to hold the Church apart for any or all of these, to make of any of them tests of good standing in the Church, to set up anything as necessary which Jesus does not clearly hold to be essen-

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tial, is absolutely incompatible with a real faith in Him as our Lord and as Head of the Church. We need to take our faith in Christ seriously; to make Him the judge, and His ideals our authoritative standard; to count nothing fundamental which is not clearly fundamental in the mind of Christ. If once the Church of Christ should thus actually believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord, the glory of the Lord would be revealed, and all flesh would see it together.

We have touched but the hem of His garment in this study; we have seen but a tiny fragment of what it would mean to *believe*, heartily to *believe*, in "Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord." Thank God there is still salvation just in touching the hem of His garment! Think what it would mean, every man in the Church, every woman, every child, if we should go out of the door of the church each Sunday to *live* all the week in the faith that Jesus is the revelation of God and of us, of what God is and what we may be. Such a faith would send us to these four precious books, to search them for the way of life. We would read and study

the life and teachings of the Master as we never have before. For He is the way, the truth, and the life, and we must know Him, if we would know God, and ourselves, and the way to live rightly and blessedly.

To believe, really to believe, in Jesus Christ as Son of God and our Lord, and to live in the flesh through the power and in the beauty of such a faith, would mean that you believe in the life of service as the most satisfying life, in the life of self-sacrifice as the noblest and most honourable career, in the sacredness of common things and relations and ways, in the possibility of achieving real godliness here and now; and it would mean a warm, glowing sense that everywhere and in all things God is with you, as definite and loving and friendly a Comrade as Jesus was with the twelve, as helpful to you and through you as Christ was to the people who knew Him. Would it not be worth everything to have such a faith and to live by it?

Such a life lies open to every one of us. There is no one who cannot *believe* in Jesus;—not perhaps in all that men have said, and all

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that the Church has taught, about Him; certainly not in the poor, unworthy presentation of Him made here. The best answer to one who hesitates, and doubts and asks for reasons and proofs, is the simple manly answer Jesus Himself gave, "Come and see." Here is the life of our Lord, set forth in four little booklets, so rich that no one has ever fathomed it, so simple that any one can know it. Come and see for yourself what Jesus is. Live with Him until you *know* Him, and catch His spirit, and see life and God as He does; and then let Him be to you what He will. I know that, if you will do that, while you may not come to look at the facts about Him just as other Christians have, while you may not hold all the doctrines the Church has formulated in the effort to say what He is, you will come to find God in Him as you find God nowhere else, and to get nearer to the heart of humanity, the heart of the world, the real meaning and value of life, through knowing Jesus Christ and living with Him, than in any other way life opens to you. For somehow,—I cannot say how, and the words of the wisest thinkers fail when they try

to tell us,—it is in Christ Jesus, Son of God, our Lord, that we find the way in which to walk, the truth about God, and the life that is life indeed. And they are on the surest, straightest path to peace, and joy, and godly, human living, who can say, as the faith in which they live each day, “For though there be gods many and lords many, yet for us there is but one God, the Father; and one Lord, Jesus Christ.” And he that hath seen Him, hath seen the Father.

IV

“I Believe in the Holy Ghost”

IV

“I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST”

SO we say in the Creed. What do we mean by it? What would it mean to have that faith not a mere utterance of the lips, but a conviction imbedded in the heart and active through the life?

We come very near to the heart of religion, and to the central fact of the Bible, when we think about faith in the Holy Spirit. And we come to the part of Christian faith which is for many Christians at once the most real and the most vague of all the elements of their belief. It is most real, for it deals with a fact of to-day. We know that God the Creator, the Father, is a living presence; but somehow we instinctively set Him at a distance, off among suns and stars and the gigantic forces of nature. We believe in Jesus Christ as a living Friend and Master, but it is easy to let our

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minds slip back into thinking of Him as One who lived and walked in Syria, remote from us in place and time. But the Holy Spirit means to us something very present and pervasive; something we feel and know in our souls to-day.

Yet with this sense of reality goes also a lack of definiteness. One of the most intelligent leaders of church thought and life confessed in private conversation during the past week that he had always, until very recently, thought or felt that the Holy Spirit was a sort of sacred fog that comes down upon us, making everything radiant but misty.

What *does* it mean to believe in the Holy Spirit? Fanatics and faddists cluster about this particular element of the Christian faith. It is not many years since a society of sincere but deluded people in California sent out some of their number as missionaries to China, with no knowledge of the language, and with no preparations, even the most rudimentary, for medical care or sanitary precaution, trusting in the Holy Spirit to bestow the gift of tongues as at Pentecost, and to keep well the bodies of

God's servants. The results were, of course, distressing, and, in some cases, tragic. A few years ago a strong and growing Italian congregation in one of our great American cities was wholly disrupted and scattered by a fever of faith in the Holy Spirit as the source of mystical experiences, indulgence of ecstatic speech and motion. Man's mystic sense is of rare beauty and value; but it must ever be used with caution, and is never safe unless driven in double team with his common sense.

One of the most valuable services rendered to the Church by its great leader, Paul, was his insistence that the truly spiritual life was the truly normal and right life; and that the "fruit of the Spirit" was not mystical experiences, but those qualities on which human society lives from day to day.

This is what it means to believe in the Holy Spirit:

It is to believe that God is living and present; not a fact of the past or of the future only, but above all a fact of the present day. The God in Whom we believe is a power and a light and a friend for living men and women and chil-

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dren; He lives and works in the present social life of humanity.

It is to believe that God and religion are essentially spiritual. There is a tendency to find God in the facts and forces of the outward world, with which science busies itself. The true view is that of the Psalmist, who looked to the heavens, declaring the glory of God, only to be struck with the greater glory of man, whom God visits, in whose soul is the possibility of communion with the infinite. God is *in* all things; yes; but God is not all things, any more than *you* are *your body*. God uses all, lives in all; but "*God is Spirit.*" We come nearer to the truth when we define Him in terms of spiritual life, affection, thought, will, than when we define Him in terms of matter and force. To believe in the Holy Spirit is to make central and emphatic in our religious experience the inner, spiritual life. It is to learn the lesson of Elijah at Horeb, that the Lord is best seen and known not in thunder and earthquake and stormy wind, but in the still, small voice.

To believe in the Holy Spirit means that we

take for our own to-day the God revealed in the Bible. What is the Bible, in its deepest and truest meaning, but the biography, or the autobiography of the Spirit of God, as He lived in and through the Hebrew people? There as nowhere else the Spirit who lives in all men and strives with them to make them realize their God-given life, revealed Himself so powerfully and so plainly that men could write the story of His life, of the development of the spiritual life of that race up from the crudity and clumsiness of childhood to the "perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." To believe in the Holy Spirit is to say, of the God we find in the Bible, "this God is our God," with us to-day, able to do in us what He wrought in His people of old. To believe in the Holy Spirit is to believe in the present value of the ideals and standards and truths of the Bible.

It means also to believe in the supreme value of spiritual things, forces, and interests. It means that we shall fear more the forces that injure the soul than those that kill the body, and shall desire more the gifts that enrich the

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spirit than those that add to our outward comfort and wealth. What are the "things of the spirit"? Paul has told us very clearly. "The fruit of the spirit is"—not mystical or magical gifts of any sort, but—"love, joy, peace, good-temper, gentleness, meekness, faithfulness, self-control." To believe in the Holy Spirit is to give ourselves above all to producing such fruits in our own lives and in the world. It is to believe in the efficacy of spiritual forces in human society; to know that the best of machinery, social or material, the finest organization, the hardest and most skilful labour, all together, count for nothing unless there is, mastering all the mechanism, the Spirit of life amid the wheels. No man who, looking out upon this troubled world, so terribly in need of control and direction, trusts chiefly in organization, or force, or any outward thing, to make society strong and safe, rather than in ideals, and in the grace of God working through the lives of men, can honestly say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." You cannot *believe* in *Him* and *rely* on something *else*.

Faith in the Holy Spirit has meaning also

for our personal living. It means *assurance of light and guidance, assurance of power, and assurance of help in spiritual experience.* From first to last, the Spirit revealed in the Bible is a spirit of Illumination, who "guides into all the truth." So far from being like a fog that settles down on our souls and makes everything misty, the Spirit of God is like a wind that dissipates the fog, and lets us see clearly.

"Blow, winds of God, awake and blow
The mists of earth away!
Shine out, O Light Divine, and show
How wide and far we stray!"

To believe in the Holy Spirit is to be assured of power. As we read the books of the Bible, setting forth the advancing stages of religious thought and feeling, we find them telling us of varied results of the coming of the Spirit of God upon a man or a group. Of Samson and Jephthah and Saul it makes Berserkers, who go out to slay and to burn. It makes Ezekiel see strange visions and dream amazing dreams. It makes the Apostles talk like drunken men, so the crowd says. But *always* this is true,

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that the coming of the Holy Spirit *gives power to do something*. Faith in the Holy Spirit is faith in a divine power ready to work with us and in us and through us—power waiting to enable us to accomplish the will of God.

And it means help in our praying, in the developing and living of a real and strong spiritual experience. Often we miss this fact. We think of prayer as our cry to God for help. Paul thinks of prayer as something in which God helps us; "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered." To believe in the Holy Spirit is to believe in One Unseen, but very real, Who stands ever ready to help me not only in the living of my outer life among men, but as well in my inner life with God, in my deeds and words, and in my prayers and heart-struggles; "the life of God in the soul of man."

What sort of men and women would we be then, you and I, if we actually believed in the Holy Spirit, if we really *lived* in that faith? That is the practical question. We stand here,

and say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." What ought to be the practical outworking of such a faith?

It will show itself in readiness to do anything God has for us to do.

One of the wonderful effects of the presence of Jesus for those three years of His active ministry was the way He made men do what they had thought they could not do. He looked at a man who for thirty-eight years had thought he could not walk; He told him to get up and walk; and the man found he could! He even told the dead to rise up and live, and somehow power entered into them and they lived and walked again. Think what you may about those stories as parts of actual history, at least they stand here on the pages of the Gospel as striking parables for you and me, setting forth what the power of God can do if men will *believe*. And there are mightier miracles than these in the Gospel story, cases where men chained down by sins broke away and became masters of themselves again; where men who faced great tasks and said, "I cannot do them; I am too weak, too ignorant, too

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poor," somehow had the faith to go on, and found light and power and resources flowing in abundantly, so that they did what they and others had labelled "impossible."

Friends, that is what it means to believe in the Holy Spirit. Not, of course, a fanatical faith that you can do anything you blindly choose to do; not an intoxicating sense that you can tap infinite power, when you please, to run your little private factory. There are few types of religion more unworthy than that which makes of God a sort of errand boy, or slave of the lamp, to give us the advantage over our fellows in our private concerns. But a real faith in the Spirit of God would mean that you could never face some task which God wants done, and man needs to have done, and no one but you seems there to do it, and say, "I am afraid; I haven't strength or wisdom or spiritual experience sufficient to undertake it." If you can find some one else to do that work, better equipped than yourself, eagerly give way to him, as Barnabas put Paul forward. But if it confronts you as *your bit* of service for God, and you are sure in your soul that God wants

some one to do it, and there is no one in sight but you, then say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit"; and go on exulting in the assurance that light will overcome your ignorance, and strength will be perfected in your weakness, and the grace of God will grow in your soul to make you equal to the tasks to which God calls you.

More than anything else the Church of to-day needs members who will look at what God wants done, at the various tasks and opportunities, simple or great, which come in the course of the Church's service of God and man, and say "I can and I will; not because I have any confidence in myself, but because I believe in the Holy Spirit." Do you really believe in a Power that can give you light and strength and the sense of God's presence and help? Why not give yourself the joy and satisfaction of proving the truth of such a faith by doing some hard, exacting work for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom? Remember how the greatest of the sons of men said, "I can of mine own self do nothing;" and how His most successful follower said, "*I can* do all things through

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Him that strengtheneth me "; and make of your life a demonstration of the power of the Spirit of God in Whom you say you believe.

Real faith in the Holy Spirit would mean also a readiness to move forward, to think new thoughts, to try new paths, to welcome new views of truth.

When one says, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," he confesses his faith in a power and a presence that is ever leading men forward. "He shall guide you into all the truth," said the Master in promising the Spirit to His disciples. We cannot sit down content with what we have always known and been and done, and maintain any real confidence in the Spirit of God. For "our God is marching on "; and to believe in the Holy Spirit is to keep one's self always in light marching order.

Not, of course, that we should be impatient of all old things, and eager to discard the well-known and tried ways for novel suggestions. The Spirit of God guards the treasures of the past, He "brings to our remembrance the things that have been taught us," and leads us not into byways but along a straight path

where each stage unfolds from that which went before. But one cannot believe in the Holy Spirit in any worthy way and not stand ever ready to move forward; one cannot believe in the Holy Spirit and rest satisfied with everything as it is. The Spirit of God is now, as of old, a pillar; but not a pillar of stone set up to mark a boundary, but a pillar of cloud and fire, moving on, so that we must break camp every day and march forward, if we would keep up with Him. I recall a conference of Christian men and women where no one broke the silence when discussion was asked for, and the meeting closed in a sense of dreary and dragging emptiness. One of those present ventured the excuse that they were all waiting for the Spirit to move them, and the leader flashed back, "*Waiting* for the Spirit to move you? You had better say, daring Him to attempt it." There is such a thing as waiting for the Spirit to move us with our doors locked and our hands tightly gripping our abiding-places, determined to move only when torn away by force; and there is such a thing as waiting for the Spirit to move us as the scouting party

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waits the whispered word to advance, as the boy waits the bell that closes school, as the football team waits the whistle. Only such souls can lay claim to a real faith in the Holy Spirit, responsive to the light touch of that power that ever leads us forward, deeper into truth, into work, into experience, into fullness of a rich life. To have a static mind or soul is to deny one's faith in the Holy Spirit.

What would it really mean to believe in the Holy Spirit? It would mean that we would know that we have power to overcome our faults, and sins, and to live a righteous and godly and Christly life.

I suppose there is scarcely a church member who is not tolerating in himself certain weaknesses, faults, or sins, and offering some sort of excuse to himself and perhaps to others for the fact that he goes on year after year without rooting out these unworthy growths. It may be that you have weeded out your bad habits from considerable areas of your living, and penned them into certain corners; but you let them linger there. And you say that these sins of temper or sensuality, of pride or of in-

dolence, these habits big or little that mar the perfectness of your Christian witnessing, are the faults of your temperament, or your heredity, or your home, or your business. Perhaps they are. But, my friend, you and I serve a Master Who said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." And He has offered to give us of His Spirit to take the place of our own faulty spirits, to give us light and strength and grace enough to enable us to master our faults and to "grow straight in the strength of our spirit, and live out our life as the light." To believe in the Holy Spirit is to confess, "I need not be mastered or disfigured by any fault; I can overcome temperament, or heredity, or weakness, or any cause that contributes to unchristly living on my part." That does not mean that if one believes in the Holy Spirit, he is at once relieved of all struggle, and floats in an atmosphere of ethereal bliss. He will have to struggle and fight. It may take long years to master some slight fault. But he will never give up, never excuse his failure, will always welcome plain criticism of his faults, even when it hurts, will make progress all the

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time, will ever say to himself, I can be, and by the grace of God's Spirit I will be, a free, honourable child of God, with nothing in my life to put to shame me or my Father, for the Holy Spirit of God gives me light to see myself as I am, and strength to grow out of what I am into what I ought to be.

To believe in God's Spirit will also give us great and unwavering hopefulness as we look out upon the life of the world.

It is easy to be despondent just now. It is more than probable that the next few years will make severe demands upon the spirits of men and women. It will grow harder to keep the spirit of heaviness from showing through the garment of praise. It will be a mighty reinforcement, a wonderful help to us, if we really believe in the Holy Spirit as the power that is at work in the world. We open our Bibles and read how the wonder and glory of the world's life began to take form when the Spirit of God brooded over chaos. Blessed are they who can discern not only the chaos of the social order to-day, but the Eternal Spirit brooding over it to bring new worlds of light and order into be-

ing to the glory of God! The men and women who are needed to-day are such as actually believe, and live in that conviction, that great things are done, and the world made right and secure, not by might, nor by craft, but by the Spirit of the Living God. If we Christians move among men strong and confident and steady and sure, because we believe that the Spirit of God is at work, that nations cannot forever go wrong, that races of men cannot forever ignore moral principles, that the heart of humanity will in the end respond to God, that the forces of the world must some day yield to the forces of justice and kindness and godliness, such a faith in the Holy Spirit of God, present and at work, will prove to be the victory that overcometh the world.

It is no little thing, my friends, to stand up in church and say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost;" no little thing for your own life that you say it; no little thing for our city and country and world that the Christian company of men and women say it as part of their confession of faith. It is a little thing only if we say it and do not mean it, if we let it be an affair of words

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and not a principle of living. What would it not mean, if we went out into life, to live as if these things were so, to meet our private and personal concerns, to face the calls of God and country and Church, to mingle in the world's life, as men and women who believe and are sure that there is light enough and strength enough for all that needs to be done, comfort and sustaining grace for all trials that must be met, guidance and power for the whole united life of mankind; if every day found us facing the dawn, eager to be moving forward, ready to go out as the men of faith have always gone out, not knowing whither they go, but sure of the guidance of the good Spirit of the Living God!

What would it mean for these dark despairing, cloudy, comfortless times, if every Christian, every church member, stood forth a witness, an embodiment, of that spirit that spoke in Isaiah, and worked in Paul, and has been the breath of life in all the saints, the Spirit that was incarnate in Jesus Christ! God stands ready to fill our souls, and through us to fill the common life of the world, with what it needs

of grace and light and power, if only we will believe. For this is the word of our Master to us who bear His name:

“If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.” “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

God help us so to ask in faith, nothing doubting, that the glory of God may be seen in the world through the Spirit that is in us!

V

“I Believe in the Holy Catholic
Church, the Communion
of Saints’

V

“I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS”

THE Christian Religion is a wholesome growth. It has its roots deep in common things.

It is striking proof of this that, in among its articles of faith, we find this particular statement, “I believe in the Holy Catholic Church.” The world asks us, “What do you believe in?” and we begin to name certain unseen and eternal verities,—God the Father, Christ our Lord, the Holy Spirit; and then we add, “The Church.” It means that Christianity is a part of human history, and of human society. It ties us to a definite loyalty. It exalts a simple human fellowship, an institution right at hand. No man can be wholly a mystic or an individualist, and repeat the Apostles’ Creed. For midway in it comes this clause, in which

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one links his private religion to the spiritual experience of the community.

One of the leaders of American philosophy declared that in this clause of the Creed we find the very secret of the Christian religion, which he defined as "Loyalty to a beloved community." We may not go so far as Professor Royce. I believe the primary motive in Christianity was, and is, not loyalty to the community, but loyalty to Christ. But it is a vital part of Christian faith and experience to believe not alone in the Christian religion but in that institution which witnesses to it, and embodies it, to assert that Christianity is not a system of belief merely, or a way of thinking and feeling; that it is a common enterprise, a corporate undertaking; and that no one is really and fully a Christian who is not taking his place in the organized life of Christianity which we call the Church.

There is deep need just now of men and women who really believe in the Church. It is, we may almost say, the fashion to believe in Christianity but not in the Church.

And the fatal thing, everywhere, is faith in

the abstract that fails in the concrete; the spirit that bursts into flame in admiration of right principles, but speedily cools in the presence of practical ways of translating principles into facts. We need men and women who will put at the center of their creed a strong statement of faith in the Church, something which men can see, which many criticize, which must be defended and maintained and borne with and supported, like any other department of our actual human life.

“I believe in the Church.” How we need men and women who will say that, and mean it, with all their hearts! Not a blind, uncritical faith. The Church needs and should welcome a constant fire of criticism, from without and from within. Certainly it is getting it in these days. Any journalist or magazine writer who runs short of other material can always find fault with the Church. Too much we who are of the Church have acquired that habit of indiscriminating criticism. We should stand among men, saying, “I believe in the Church,” claiming what can be made good, that the Church is at least as worth while, as

close to its legitimate ideal, as is any other great human institution that can be set beside it for comparison.

Certainly all who have seen the real facts of the wartime must see how vital a part of the faith of a Christian is faith in the Church. Some of the articles that have appeared in our leading magazines, dealing with the religion of the soldiers, the camps, the trenches, have been very misleading, obviously founded on superficial impressions, not on facts. I refer particularly to frequent statements to the effect that the men of our day care profoundly for religion, but not for the forms of it. There has been revealed an unsuspected power in institutional religion. Everywhere serious critics of the facts have noted how much the sacrament means to men, how they prize definite worship, the institutions of religion. Some of the great religious movements which had felt a strong tendency to get away from the Church have learned how powerful is the appeal of definite, formal, institutional religion. It is exceedingly significant that one of the foremost leaders of Evangelical Protestantism in

Great Britain has recently announced his conviction that we must make far more of symbolism, of the sacraments, of the outward, concrete, tangible ordinances and institutions of the Church, if we would meet the needs of our time. We must have Christians who *believe in the Church*.

But Christian faith in the Church is not an act in which we lay aside our ideals, and profess satisfaction with an existing institution. What is the Church in which we say we believe? It is an ideal; and we believe in the existing Church only in so far as it realizes or may work toward the realization of that ideal. For our faith is in "The Holy Catholic Church." We believe in the Church as a holy and catholic institution; or, as a creed still more ancient phrases it still more definitely, we believe in "one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church."

What do we mean by that?

Words and phrases grow like snowballs as they roll on through the years; all sorts of unwarranted meanings cluster about them, until we mistake the cover for the kernel. Get back

to the reality and freshness of the opening days of the Christian religion, and try to recover the meaning these words had then, taking each in its simplest, its primary sense; and we see the Church set before us in this phrase, "a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

"I believe in *one* Church." There are two ways of holding such a faith. Some say, "I believe in one Church," adding in their hearts, "and that *one* is my own." They have an intense and fervent desire for church unity, for they see it as possible only through all other branches of the Church of Christ coming to their way and to their truth and to their life. The Pope had a simple answer to give to the delegates from the Commission on Faith and Order; there was just one way to church unity, he said, and that was for all the sects to come back into the Catholic Church. Some one tells of a little community in which, during the fuelless days of two years ago, the two churches of the town combined in their worship. But one of the ministers at last said to the other, "I think it will be better, if we go back now

to our former practice; you worship God in *your* way, and I will worship Him in *His* way."

Real faith in church unity, in the *one* Church, is a conviction that it is possible that all the churches should come together, not on the basis of any one now existing, but in a true unity that gives room for all their variety, no one superseding the others, but all together caught up into a higher, comprehensive oneness; a unity of spirit, of work, of action, even while differing in faith and in organization.

It is a hopeful sign that so many are showing faith in the oneness of the Church of Christ, in the largest measure of fellowship and coöperation, a faith that makes one ashamed of denominational partisanship, and eager for any and every possible realization of church unity. How can Christians ever forget that our Lord, in His last prayer, prayed for His followers, "that they all may be one, to the end that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me"? How can we lose sight of the fact, or of its solemn and far-reaching implications, that the one commandment of Him whom we call Lord

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and Master is not that we stand for a certain faith or a certain order, but that we love one another? Christ tells us, in words plain beyond the possibility of doubt, that the one convincing proof we can offer the world of the truth of His Gospel is in the largest measure of loving unity. Every one of us is a member, first of all, and supremely always, not of a local church, nor of some special denomination, but of the Catholic and universal Church of Christ.

We believe in the *Holy* Church. Here again is a great word often taken in a small sense. Some have believed in a holy church, meaning thereby a pious, Pharisaical church, ceremonious and strict, separate from the rest of the world's life. You recall Donald Hankey's statement that many of the soldiers would define a Christian as "a man who feels himself better than his neighbours."

But there is a deep, real, wonderful sense in which we may take that word "holy." For originally the "holy" object was one brought and given up to God, consecrated, devoted. "Holy" is akin to "whole" and "whole-

some." To be truly holy is to be wholly committed to some great cause or person.

That is the *holy* Church in which we believe, a Church ready to forget everything but Christ and His Gospel, a Church not half but whole in its commitment to the mission and the faith of Christ, a Church that loves God with *all* its heart and soul and mind and strength. Do we believe in such a Church as that, devoted, consecrated, true to the aims and ideals of Christ, filled with "the simplicity which is in Christ"?

We believe in the *Catholic* Church. What a mass of accretions has gathered about that great word, until some have come to distrust and dislike the word itself! "Catholic" has come to mean a church of pretensions, of arrogant claims, a church demanding the right to coerce men and to make the Church one through compulsion.

What does that great word "Catholic" really mean? It is a noble word. We ought not to abandon its use to a single branch of the Church of Christ, and that the least Catholic in spirit of them all. We ought never to speak of the Roman Church as "the Catholic

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Church," never to use the word "Catholic" as meaning the Church of authority. For the word meant originally, and should be used as meaning now, "the Church taken as a whole," the comprehensive Church, the whole body of believers in Christ, the Church that includes all the branches and divisions of Christianity. To *believe* in the Catholic Church is to deny all exclusive pretensions in my own particular little denomination; it is to declare my faith in my own part of the Church only in so far as that part is trying to realize the ideal of one great comprehensive body of Christ. One cannot be a sectarian, and honestly repeat the Apostles' Creed.

Paul was filled with the true Catholic spirit when he prayed for his friends and for all Christians that they might come to know, "with all the saints," "what is the length and depth and height and breadth" of the religion of Christ. We know nothing as we ought to know it, in the realm of Christian truth, until we know what all Christians think and feel about it. To believe in the Catholic Church is to believe in a comprehensive, generous, in-

clusive view of the Church, which takes in, and rejoices over, the infinite diversity of thought and feeling, counting the Church richer for all the variety. It means faith in a Church generous, elastic, rich, and free. It means that we take for our own all that is good in any part of the Christian Church; for "all things are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

We believe in the *Apostolic Church*. Here again is a word some distrust, through the wrong ideas that have gathered about it, figments of an "apostolic succession," that has no warrant in the New Testament or in Church history, save as an actual and honourable method of church administration, one among many; or reactions to a bare and primitive sort of Christianity, "apostolic" only in that it is as coldly Jewish as the Apostles were in the outset, before the Gospel had risen upon them in its noonday glory.

What does the word really mean? Nothing more nor less than *missionary*. An apostle is a man sent on a mission. An apostolic church is a church on fire with its mission, a church

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that cannot sit still but must move out to take the world for Christ, a church that not only maintains a Missionary Society, but *is* a missionary society, a church which takes Christ's mission as its own, and ever feels the touch of the hand of the Son of Man, and hears Him say, "Go, seek and save the lost; put all you have and are into bringing the Gospel to the whole creation."

Such are the strong, real, splendid, common meanings of these great words. "I believe in one Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Church," that is, in a united, consecrated, comprehensive, missionary Church. What a wonderful privilege and responsibility it is in this day to stand up here every Sunday and say that, confessing our faith in a Church united, devoted, inclusive, aggressive. The Church of Christ is not all that? No, but we believe that it ought to be and can be; and we declare, in this confession of faith in the Holy Catholic Church, that we shall do our utmost to make the Church thus one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

But there is an added phrase in the Creed:

"The Holy Catholic Church, *the communion*

of saints." Much that is sacred and precious and beautiful comes into our confession of faith through the presence of this phrase. It is one of those words that are addressed to the heart rather than to the head. The warmth of Christian emotion comes stealing into our faith when we say this. One hesitates to try to say what it means; its meanings are so varied, so tender, so rich.

But these meanings at least we find in it:

It reminds us how large a part *fellowship, comradeship*, plays in the Christian life. It recalls us to the fact so readily forgotten, that the Church is a family, pledged to intimate brotherhood. You cannot really believe in the communion of saints, and be indifferent to those who attend the same church, take part in the same prayers and hymns, receive the same sacramental bread and wine, and share the same aims and hopes for the Kingdom of Christ. To believe in the communion of saints is to believe in a church full of loving fellowship, where every one feels at home, and no one is forgotten. It is not easy to make and keep a church in the city such a "communion

of saints." But every time we repeat the Creed we profess *that*, as the ideal which we pledge ourselves to make true, just so far as we can.

It reminds us also that we are one with all who have gone before, and all who are to come after; we believe that the Church is a great and wonderful fellowship lasting through the ages, infinitely sacred and precious to us for the sake of those who have believed in God and served men through the Church, who have sat here and worshipped, or have gone out from the home church to give their lives for Christ—all the heroes and martyrs, and the unnamed faithful ones. What a solemn and beautiful privilege to be one with them in an unbroken fellowship in the faith and service of Christ!

It means also, this confession of faith in "the communion of saints," that we gladly claim fellowship with a wider circle than that circumscribed by the bounds of the organized Church, with all true lovers of God and servants of man, with many outside the Church, but one with us in spirit. If we had only "the Church" in our creed, we might feel that we

were shutting out many phases and representatives of unorganized religion. But "the communion of saints" includes them all, Christian Associations, Salvation Army, Red Cross, Hospital service, settlements, all the vast comradeship of the lovers of man. When I repeat the Creed, I am saying that I believe in the fellowship of the people of God, under any name or no name.

"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints."

This article in the Creed which we repeat every Sunday challenges every man and woman who says he is a Christian to prove it by a definite act of loyalty, by definite personal connection with an actual coöperative effort to realize that faith. To be a Christian and not a church member is to believe in the Spirit of Christ but not in His body. Christian faith does not get far in effectiveness until it lays hold seriously on this article, and believes in the *Church*. And you cannot put into real and definite action that faith in the Church as a whole save by honest, earnest, devoted membership in some particular Christian Church.

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There may be some among the readers of these words who cherish in their hearts a Christian faith, but have let slip their positive, definite connection with the Church. Within a week recently I came upon two men who were formerly active members of a church I served formerly in another city; one of them was President of the Men's Club of that church. They have lived here in New York for more than ten years, and their membership is still lying dormant in that church a thousand miles away. They are men of power and influence, of wealth and energy. And here is the Church of Christ going on with its mighty mission, the most glorious and valuable and worthy fellowship of good men and good women on earth; and these men will not even take the trouble to be counted as active members in it. If you are in similar fashion letting your church membership lapse, I beg of you to take quick and positive action that will enable you to stand and say, with all your heart, "I believe in the Church." The Church of to-day has many faults and weaknesses. But most of them would be greatly lessened, or would even wholly

disappear, if all who in their hearts believe in that for which the Church stands should take their rightful place in its membership, its worship, its work.

It is time for a new faith in the Church; a faith that shall put to shame and bring to repentance any man or woman whose Christianity does not issue in full and devoted loyalty to the Church. They are false prophets who tell us that the Church is of small account in the life of our day, a negligible factor. A survey just completed reveals the fact that *in our State Colleges and Universities* seventy-seven per cent. of the student body are church members, while ten per cent. more express church preferences. An institution which can command some loyalty on the part of eighty-seven per cent. of the young people most awake to the advantages of education, has immense social value. Social settlements, even those least religious in character, yes, even those most aloof from the Church and most critical of it, draw most of their active workers from the ranks of the church membership. The Church, whatever its faults and shortcomings, is still the one

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great community, fellowship, organized movement, that gathers into itself those who stand for faith in God and service of man. I appeal to every one who reads these words to *believe* in this central article of the Christian Creed; not merely to *say*, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints," but to show that faith by simple, straightforward alignment of his life with the Church of Christ, through membership in it, attendance on its worship, and sharing in its efforts.

Some day, please God, we shall get above some of the faults of the present body of Christ; shall climb to higher ground, where we come nearer to one another and to Christ's ideal. One of the prophets of our day has reminded us that dwellers at the foot of a mountain may be miles apart, with walls and fences between them; but if all start climbing, they will surely meet at the top of the mountain. Raise high enough the faith, the practice, the worship, the fellowship of the parts of the Church of Christ, and they will realize their oneness as they climb to the greater height and the purer air. It is not enough, in this great

day, to believe, in general and *in one's heart*, in God, and in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. We must have faith put into action, faith working by love, faith shown through loyalty to an institution, faith in that Church which is the body of Christ, without which our Lord is but a disembodied spirit in the life of mankind. There is no better career opening before any one of us than to *believe* in the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, and, in the power of that faith, to enter some definite local fellowship of men and women who have a like precious faith, there to realize, so far as glowing ideals can ever take shape in simple facts and institutions, the vision of a Church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, worthy of the Lord and Master whose name she bears.

VI

“I Believe in the Forgiveness of Sins”

VI

“I BELIEVE IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS”

A CREED ought to be more than a statement of opinion, or of intellectual conviction. It must be that, of course. We believe in certain great realities, lying deep at the heart of the life of the world, things not seen, but known by their effects upon the soul and the society of man. Our Creed is a statement of those convictions.

But a creed ought to be more than that. It is a right and a wholesome fact, as we noted in our last study, that the Apostles' Creed sets in among the articles of a Christian faith a statement of belief in an institution, a concrete, actual part of our social life; that a Christian not only believes in certain ideals but believes also in the Church, as the organized attempt to put those ideals into practice.

It is even more significant and valuable that

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the Creed includes, among the essential articles of a Christian faith, belief in a certain conduct, and spirit, and experience. When we say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," we are saying that we believe that the life of a Christian should be distinguished by a certain spirit and experience, that a Christian ought to live in a certain definite way. That gives the Creed a direct and strong connection with our common life. It does for the Creed what is done for the Lord's Prayer by the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." Our creeds might be more useful and commanding, if they dealt more with duties and practices and experiences, if they were more largely concerned with truths that make a difference in conduct. It is one of the chief excellencies of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms that they give so large place to practical matters. The Shorter Catechism has maintained its influence and its power so surprisingly in part because it devotes two-thirds of itself to matters of conduct and worship, and but one-third to the doctrines that lie back of our living and praying.

It is of great significance then that, in among the statements, in this short Creed, of what we are to think comes this one clear statement of something we ought to feel and to do. Of course it hints at great doctrines that lie back of it,—the whole scriptural treatment of salvation, redemption, atonement, the entire Christian attitude toward sin. But 'all that is implied, not expressed. It is significant that there is no specific theory of the atonement in the Creed. It is all the more true to the Bible for that fact, for there is no one, absolute theory of the atonement in the Bible. This phrase, "the forgiveness of sins," fits into the simple lines of the parable of the Prodigal as readily as into the more highly theological ideas of Paul.

What does it mean and involve to confess this particular belief, to include it in the Creed of the Church?

It emphasizes, first of all, the vital importance of sin and its healing. It sets forth the fact that the cure of sin is the supreme concern.

We have come upon days that bring to us, powerfully and poignantly, a realization of the

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vast and bitter ills that afflict the sons of men. War, poverty, famine, ignorance, disease, how hideous and tough they are! But out of the whole range of black and bitter evils the Christian takes one as alone worthy of mention, and that is *sin*. The radical socialist says, "I believe in the abolition of poverty"; the mental practitioner says, "I believe in the elimination of the errors of mortal mind"; the internationalist says, "I believe in the ending of war"; and all good men and women will say "Amen" to the whole program. But there is just one great affirmation about human life and society that is big enough, radical enough, true enough, to go into the Creed of Christians, and that is, "I believe in getting rid of *sin*." Sin is the one root evil; lessen that, and real progress is made. Get rid of that, and other evils will disappear. The Christian is concerned about *sin*, nothing less, nothing lighter. Life is wrong because men *do* wrong, and even more because men *are* wrong. Sin is the one evil about which we need to get aroused, against which we need to direct all our forces.

One of the most universal characteristics of

human nature is its ready confidence in panaceas. Each of us tends to rivet his attention on some one fact,—some ill to be attacked, or some good to be sought, and to think and say that all else would become right if only that were set right. I sat through a meeting recently where certain current issues were being discussed, and noted how each speaker assumed that other problems would be easily solved, if only his own particular hobby were hitched to the chariot of the Church. One was sure that all would be well if only we could secure strict Sabbath Observance. Another set forth in glowing terms a millennial state sure to be realized if only we attended properly to religious education in our Sunday Schools. Still another was confident that rigid enforcement of prohibition would bring about the solution of all other social problems. Industrial democracy was the key another held up by which the ideal future could be unlocked. So it went on, each man offering his panacea.

But the Creed is right. The root of the whole trouble is *sin*, and the cure is the *forgiveness of sin*. You trifle with the surface of

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things until you get down to that black fact and force that is at the bottom of it all. Men do wrong and are wrong, and they must be made right, so that they will do the right. That is the faith of the Christian and of the Christian Church. Thank God, we have a deeper, broader view of sin than our fathers had; we see the relative unimportance of purely personal defects, and the tremendous meaning of acts and attitudes that are socially hurtful. But if ever we lose our concern about sin, if ever our sense of its terrible meaning and consequences becomes weakened, our Christian faith has received a blow at its heart. There is no help for society save in the forgiveness of sins. So long as men do wrong, and the wrong goes on without repentance and remission, men will suffer without hope of salvation, or true progress.

But to believe in the forgiveness of sins means also a conviction that sin is not necessary, not inevitable, not unconquerable. There is such a thing as having a sense of sin that weighs one down like a millstone, that crushes one's spirit under a conviction of hopelessness.

Christianity is a religion of joy, because, though it sees the evil of the world with keen and full appreciation, it also knows that God can clear it all away, that it need not be, that men can be set right and kept right.

Such a faith leaves a sinner without excuse. To talk of fate, of sin as a part of evolution, to call it "psychological suggestion," to excuse or palliate it in any way, is to talk and think as no Christian has a right to talk and think. To a Christian sin is a very real thing, and the forgiving love of God is just as real. The Christian believes that sin can and should be done away with. He views sin not as a fate that dogs man's steps, but as a fact of which he ought to be ashamed, because God stands waiting always to cleanse him from its guilt and power.

But when the Christian says, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," he means that he believes not in the overlooking of sin, but in its overcoming; not in making light of it, but in making away with it. Men have always been subject to the temptation of thinking lightly of their wrong deeds and their wrong selves, of

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imagining that all that is necessary is that a sinner come to God and ask forgiveness, and God will sponge the slate clean without any particular care or cost. Forgiveness is no such shallow business as that. *You* cannot really *forgive* your fellowman by saying lightly, "Don't mention it," and gracefully leading the conversation to another subject,—not if you really want to *make things right*. It is the most costly and painful thing in the world,—to forgive sins. And Calvary is the proof to us that to forgive sins is a costly and painful thing even for God our Father. The Christian sees this article in the light of the cross. "He bore our sins." We may not know just what that means, but it surely means that forgiveness is not easy or cheap, and yet God will carry it through. It surely means that, when we come to God for forgiveness, He will not easily overlook the wrong that we do and are, but will set His power and love at work to overcome the evil that we do and are. Sin is truly forgiven only when the wrong has been set right.

Something like that is what we mean when

we say that we believe in the forgiveness of sins; that sin is the one great problem and evil of the world; that it can be overcome; and that God is ready to pay the cost and do the work of its overcoming, if men will trust in Him.

What would it mean to live in such a faith? What ought a Christian to be, if he really believes in the forgiveness of sins?

First of all, the one who really believes this article of the Christian Creed will be deeply sensitive to moral values and conditions.

He will care most of all about moral values, in his own personal life, and in the care and conduct of his home and of his business. You cannot honestly say this part of the Creed, if actually you care more for profits than for honour in your business, if you fear poverty or disease more than you fear crookedness of soul or the adoption of a low standard, if you are more concerned that your children shall be well-fed, well-clothed, well-educated, and well placed than that they shall be free from vice and guile and ungodliness. Honestly, if you had to choose, would you rather have your children conspicuously successful or highly honour-

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able? The words of the Master take hold upon us, as we face this matter, "Fear not that which can kill the body; but fear that which can kill both body and soul in hell." Is your supreme concern for your children, for yourself, for all over whom you have influence, the one great end to which all else must bend and give way, the fostering of righteousness, of straight, pure character? Do you conduct your home, your amusements, your business, with that in view as chief end? You will, if you really believe in the forgiveness of sins.

We shall not be misled by specious pleas of the supreme value of art, or of political considerations, or of business success, or of any other matter that tries to usurp the dominating place of simple rightness in our standards. The Christian who really believes in the Christian view of sin will not condone a vicious play or book on the ground of its artistic or literary excellence. The *sin* that is at the root of it will be its full and sufficient condemnation. The times call for Christians swift and sure to stand by such moral judgments. A flood of vileness is being let loose, much of it under the

plea that it is artistic. God give His people the good sense to call it plain *sin*, and to hate it. To compromise on a moral issue is to deny the Christian faith.

This does not mean that we shall cultivate a narrow mind, or risk acquiring a diseased and morbid sensitiveness to evil facts and forces. It is no evidence of Christianity to detect evil where none is, to suspect innocent facts and forces. This is no time for Puritanical judgments in matters of recreation, or social conduct. The Christian must be free, and happy, and tolerant. But where there is sin, he must call it sin, and hate it, and hit it, and try to get it out of himself, out of other men, and out of the social order.

To believe,—really to believe—in the forgiveness of sins ought also to make one holy and happy in his own personal experience.

It ought to make him holy, for he knows he has no excuse for lingering in the low places. God has called him to walk on the heights, and he knows that, by the grace of God, he can climb up there and stay there. He has no right to shelter faults and vices and sins, little or big,

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in any dark corners of his life. If he detects in himself a bad habit, a wrong trait, a false attitude, let him say, "I believe in the *forgiveness* of sins," and let him trust God to cleanse him from that evil way. Do we thus believe? If we do, how can we let ourselves go on, as sometimes we do, year after year, with faults and sins marring our Christian character, and we excusing or palliating them? We believe not in the *continuance* of sins, but in the *forgiveness* of sins.

Such a faith ought to make us happy as well as holy. It is the very glory of the Christian religion that it makes one deeply conscious of his sin, and yet makes him radiant with joy, because it promises forgiveness. But so often we do not take the promise at its full value. We let the wrong-doing of the past and of the present cloud us. We pray for forgiveness, and then go on wondering if we are forgiven. I am quite sure that some who read this would face life in a new spirit of joy and zest if they could really believe in the forgiveness of sins, and go out from here wholly freed from worry about wrong acts and ways of the

past, knowing that God has freely pardoned their sins, and will set them free from the power of them.

I once had a dear friend, an old man who, more than most Christians, had entered into the full joy of a life with God. When we had come to intimate friendship, he told me one day that, some twenty years back, lay a decade when he had fallen lower and lower into the habit of intoxication, until his friends had lost hope of him, and he himself was in despair. Then somehow he gained a new experience of the grace of God in Christ, repented, became a new man. He said, "As I think back over my life now, I come to the beginning of that period of sin and shame, and those years seem to drop out. God has taken them away." That man believed in the forgiveness of sins. It is possible to have one's sins taken away, and strength and joy put in their place. True Christian faith is a faith that makes one holy and happy.

There is a third effect that should and will come from a real and hearty faith in the forgiveness of sins; it will make the believer

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generous and hopeful in his view of men and of the world.

A Christian should always be one who, in his relations with other men, and with social groups, believes in the forgiveness of sins. That does not mean that he is easy-going in his judgments, that he is readily fooled or cajoled or imposed upon. It is not a manifestation of the Christian spirit to look at wrong men or wrong conditions, and say, with a benevolent smile, "It's of no consequence." The Christian knows that evil has eternal consequences. He knows that it is utterly impossible to overestimate the danger, the shame, the awfulness, of sin. But he knows also that "where sin abounds, grace much more abounds." He takes for his motto that great-hearted word of Jesus, "never despairing of any one," and *believes*, in the very presence of the worst evils, that these things need not be, that men can be saved, and the world can be set right, and sin can be conquered and rooted out, through the forgiving grace of God.

To believe really, fully, in the forgiveness of sins, would mean that you would go into the

world of business and trade every day, saying to yourself, "I believe the chief concern in business is that business shall be *right*, and I know it can be made right, and my business is to make it right." Clear vision of the wrong, and triumphant conviction that it can be made right,—if that spirit were in the heart and life of every man who repeats the Apostles' Creed, how long would it be before business and politics would feel a new and mighty power within them, making for righteousness?

To believe in the forgiveness of sins would make one hopeful about criminals and social outcasts. It is this Christian faith, outworking through the social order, that has led us toward the new penology, which is not content to punish crime, but dares aim at the reclamation of the criminal. You cannot honestly repeat the Apostles' Creed, and abandon hope for the redemption of any set or group of men. Why, you believe in the *forgiveness* of sins! What a marvellous story that is, for all its simplicity, of the Master in the center of the group of self-righteous Pharisees and Scribes, with the woman before Him taken in the very

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act of shame. "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." Did He treat her sin lightly? Did she go away feeling that, after all, it made little difference? We know that she felt her sinfulness as never before, as no stones could have made her feel it, nor any stinging words. But hope and joy came back with the words, "Go and *sin no more*." Friends, we are Christians in order to put into effect, as far and as fast as we can do it to the good of men and women and society, all through our social order, that spirit of the Master, uncompromising severity toward sin joined to hope and faith and love toward the sinner. What would it mean if the thirty million people in this country who say they believe in the Christian Creed *really believed* in the forgiveness of sins as a practical policy in dealing with social offenders!

Yes, and it has a message, this article of our Creed, peculiarly adapted to these days that follow the war. The more we have been impressed with the sins of our enemies, the more we have felt the enormity of their crimes, the more must we, if we are Christians, look to

Germany and Austria and Turkey and Bulgaria, and say, "We believe in the forgiveness of sins." That does not mean that we change our standards or weaken our judgments. God never wants us to juggle with facts, or with moral issues. Nor can forgiveness ever be put into effect by forgetfulness. To say, "Let us ignore what has been done, and resume relations as if these things had not been," would be not a godly but an ungodly course. But while there must be no softness, no overlooking, no condonation, there must be an eager faith and hope that these sins shall be repented of, and forgiven, and that, just so soon as it can rightly be, there shall be once more mutual respect and friendliness and good-will among all the peoples lately at war. One cannot be a whole Christian, and ignore the parable of the Unmerciful Servant, the petition "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," and the injunction, "Forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

To repeat this article, with a real faith, means that one asserts his belief in the for-

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giving, generous, loving, hopeful, tender spirit as the chief quality and grace of Christian experience.

Out of all that makes up a Christian experience, this one element is deemed worthy of a place in the Creed. What would you, what would I naturally insert, if allowed to set in the Creed of the Church a single quality or element of Christian experience? How much there is we think of as vital:—prayer, faith, church attendance, consistent conduct, and all the rest. But the one quality singled out for inclusion in our simple statement of faith is “forgiveness.” Every Sunday we repeat our conviction that that is the chief grace in the Christian life, that the distinguishing fact about a Christian is the fact that he believes in forgiveness.

Is not that the view of the Gospel of Christ? Worship meant much to the mind of the Master. Yet He plainly said that forgiveness was more important, and, if one were bringing his gift to the altar, and remembered that his brother had something against him, he must go and set right that wrong relationship before

he could truly and properly offer his gift. Jesus brought together in a wonderfully compact statement the elements of true prayer. And then, when He had taught the prayer, He went back and held up one fact, forgiveness, as if that were the most vital part of the prayer. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither shall your Father forgive you." The Creed is right in selecting this as the one element of a Christian experience worth more than any other.

O my friends, let this be no word that lingers on our lips. Let it get to work deep in our hearts. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Why not live in the full tide of that faith? Are you held fast in the grip of some wrong desire or passion or habit? Have you tried to break away only to fail? Have you tried to excuse yourself, to think lightly of it or ignore it? The Christian faith and the Christian Church call to you to come and find in Christ the forgiveness of your sins. It is no easy transaction to which you are called. God forgive the preachers and evangelists who have made men think that sin was just an account

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to be settled, a mistake to be sponged away, a matter of a few penitent words on your part and a few kindly words on God's part. It means facing your sin, acknowledging it, calling it by its proper name, the worst name rather than the best; it means seeing yourself just as you are in the sight of God. And it means, on God's part, great mercy and loving-kindness, willingness to bear with you, to live in you, to rebuild your character with the wrong things left out. It means all that Christ and Calvary mean. It means what only God can do, what God Himself *cannot* do unless you are honest and thorough in your penitent desire for a right life. But it means hope, assurance, joy, if you seek God in the spirit of true penitence and faith. If you want with all your heart to be rid of sin, and to live in the beauty of holiness, I declare to you that nothing can keep you from that great joy and success of overcoming; for God is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and tender; and "There is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared." No one need ever go on in sin; for the grace of God is ready to bring forgiveness to all who

will come to Him. And what a blessed experience and influence it would insure if, in our relations with other people, we lived in full faith in the forgiveness of sins. How our petty grudges, our childish misunderstandings, our bitternesses and prejudices,—often secretly cherished in our hearts as if they were of value to us, when in fact they chill and curse and cramp our souls,—how they would fade and slink away in the light of a full faith in forgiveness.

“I believe in the forgiveness of sins.” What lives we would live, if we really believed that! Holy, happy, helpful, hopeful, full of joy and confidence and generous love, because full of the redeeming grace of God in Christ Jesus.

“The forgiveness of sins.” Lord, we believe; help Thou our unbelief.

VII

“I Believe in the Resurrection of the
Body, and the Life Ever-
lasting. Amen”

VII

“I BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION
OF THE BODY, AND THE LIFE
EVERLASTING. AMEN”

TO the men who framed the Apostles' Creed, to the age which first began its use, it found a fitting climax in a statement of belief in immortality. They could think of no better way to end their confession of faith than to say, “I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.”

Do we still feel that faith in a life to come is the crown of Christian belief? Or has immortality sunk to a position of comparative neglect among the great affirmations of religion? It is a serious question whether people believe in life everlasting and care about it, as once men did. There was a time not long ago when prayers always ended as the Creed ends, with a petition “save us at last,” or a thought of the “many mansions” where

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we should "meet again." Have we swung far away from that point of view? Have we swung *too* far?

Beyond doubt, the tendency to think less about the long future than Christians thought in the past has much in it that is wholesome. So far as it marks a reaction from excessive otherworldliness, so far as it serves to emphasize the supreme importance of the present life, and the truth that eternal life is a fact here and now, it is all to the good. But what we call healthy-mindedness may actually become a disease; and we need to be on guard lest we lose the vital value of a faith in life to come; we need to cherish the precious and inspiring "power of an endless life." Let us be honest enough to confess the difficulties in the way of firm faith in immortality, and reasonable enough to face the tangle of facts and arguments calmly and open-mindedly. But we may be sure that, deep down in our hearts,

" 'Tis life, not death, for which we pant,
More life, and fuller, that I want."

It is hard to see how one can believe at all in

God the Father, Living and Loving, and not, at least, say this to our God and Maker:

“Thou wilt not leave us in the dust;
Thou madest man,—he knows not why;
He thinks he was not *made* to *die*.
And Thou hast made him; Thou art just.”

It is precisely because Christian faith in life everlasting rests not on any philosophical theory of natural immortality, not on any facts established by science, but on our faith in God the Father and His love for us, as manifested in Jesus Christ His Son our Lord, that the Christian can be serenely indifferent to the outcome of speculations and investigations in the realm of psychical research. If it should be conclusively proved or conclusively disproved that the spirits of those who have gone can communicate with living men, it would not affect essentially the grounds of Christian faith in the life everlasting. The last article in the Creed rests down upon the first article, as the roof of a house rests down upon its solid foundation.

It is our Christian heritage and right to be-

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lieve in life everlasting,—that life does not end with death, when one has known God and felt within his soul the grace of God in Jesus Christ, but that it goes on through all the ages in never-ending growth and joy. It is a grace and a glory thus to believe in the permanence and dominance of the spiritual interests of life, to be sure that the spirit does not live by favour of the body, but the body by grace of the spirit, to know that, when we leave this life, there is a home not made with hands waiting for us, and that death is but passing from one room to another in the vast and wonderful house of our Father. Such a faith brings strength, and steadiness, and independence into the living of life. *It makes men different.*

What would it mean actually to live in the light and power of such a conviction, to walk amid our duties and relationships and recreations sure at every moment that not death, but endless life was to be our portion?

One sure result would be that we would arrange our lives with reference to a long future.

If we really believe in immortality, we shall

surely live a longer-visioned life. We shall be more ready to take risks and chances for the sake of far-off good; we shall be more careless about present gains, less apt to sell our birth-right for any mess of pottage, however hungry we may become.

This does not mean that we shall cultivate an "otherworldly" temper, or live a life divorced from every-day reality, unmindful of the things around us, moving in a dream. That is not the way in which Jesus walked. It is only in the imaginings of artists that He has moved among men with a halo about His head, like a visitor from another country. There never was on earth any one more at home than Jesus. But He built His life on a long-visioned plan.

The Christian should live as a sensible boy lives in school. He is looking forward to a college course and then to a profession. He will make the best of his school work if he always has that future in mind as he deals with the duties of the present. He must not neglect his immediate tasks for dreams of the success that awaits him by and by. That is a sure way to lose the success of which he dreams.

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But neither should he deal with the facts and duties of the present without regard to what lies before him in the long future. He will be wisest and surest to succeed, who directs his studies always, by a subconscious purpose, to the long adjustments of his life, and its lasting privileges and obligations. Real faith in immortality ought to give us the same wise long-sightedness, so that all our deeds will be shaped and set in the line of a long and steadfast purpose.

To live by faith in everlasting life will give one independence and courage. A man who honestly believes that some day he is to stand before God, and that what he *is* will count when present-day issues and passions and parties have faded, will not be a slave to any person or any opinion.

Gerald Stanley Lee has said that virtue may be defined as "doing what one will wish to have done twenty years from now." Taking the future into the account makes for rightness and steadiness. Taking the eternal future into the account makes one more brave and strong and serene.

A third clear result of a real faith in life everlasting will be comfort and hope in dark times. They come to every one of us, these experiences that try the soul, the death of loved ones, the shock of disillusionment, the pain of disappointment, the breaking of the ties that make life blessed. To believe in everlasting life takes the sting out of death and grief. Out of a pastoral experience of nearly thirty years I can say that the most vivid impression I have received is that of the measureless difference between homes where death has come and found no Christian faith to master it, and homes where death has been swallowed up in victory through the glorious power of faith in God and in the life that is to come.

And when the time comes, as come it surely will for each of us, however he may forget or ignore the fact as he goes on his way, when we must look death in the eyes, and face for ourselves that critical passage from the known to the unknown, from the certainties of the senses to where the senses fail, what a power and comfort will come to one out of a full and hearty faith in eternal life, out of a steadily-

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formed and treasured conviction of the undying worth of a personal experience of the fellowship of the Living God. I went once to see an old man, who had lived in God, and knew he had, and had now come to the end of life, and knew he had. He said to me, "It is all right. I have not been a very good man; but I am worth too much for God to throw me away on some dust-heap."

Every crisis, most of all the supreme crisis, is different for the one who meets it in the sure hope of everlasting life.

These are great and priceless values. They are so great, so precious, even in the dimness of our present knowledge, even when faith has to fight for its life, that we almost understand why God has not made immortality more indisputable. For if men knew by direct perception, or by scientific demonstration, that life goes on after the death of the body, the discipline of life in the flesh might become intolerable, and men would miss the tremendous moral and spiritual value of struggle to maintain a great faith against very real doubt.

To believe, actually, honestly, in the life everlasting, ought to make a vital difference in the spirit and conduct of one's life. It will make such a difference, if our faith in immortality is real,—just such a difference as that which distinguishes the man who owns a beautiful wooded estate which he knows is to be passed on for indefinite years to his descendants, from the man who has bought a forest simply to grind it up into paper-pulp. This man tries to get out of it all he can, though he leave it after a few years unsightly and desolate, stripped bare. That one tries to build it up, to put into it all he can, to lavish care upon it, that through the long future it may be the nobler for his care and sacrifice. So the man whose vista of life is bounded with this earthly span will live to get out of life all he can before it ends; while the one whose horizon is God's eternity will live to put into the enrichment of life all he can, for the growing glory of the life to come.

But the Creed uses two phrases to express the Christian faith in immortality. What of the other, "the resurrection of the body"?

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Here surely, one may say, is an outgrown fancy, untrue for most thinking men and women of our time. That this body of ours shall rise and live we can neither believe nor desire.

Undoubtedly, were we writing a creed for to-day, we would not include such a phrase. It comes in as an inheritance from Hebrew thought. The body meant much to the Jewish believer. The rabbis even taught, so we are told, that when a faithful son of Abraham died, his buried body rolled through underground passages from the land where he had died to the Holy Land and waited there for the resurrection to call it up to new life. A New Testament scholar gives an interesting explanation of Paul's phrase, "a spiritual body." He reminds us that Paul's problem was to reconcile Hebrew and Greek thinking. The Hebrew thought of the future life as bodily; the Greek thought of it as spiritual. Paul united both views in the assurance that we shall have a "spiritual body."

Many Christians of to-day have practically left behind this idea, that our very bodies will

in some way be re-formed and re-animated in the life to come. Many good and faithful believers have come to feel that it is a matter of comparative indifference whether the resurrection of Christ was physical or purely spiritual. We should all see this at least, that the most serious mistake is that of those who say that Christ's resurrection, or ours, cannot be *real* unless it is *physical*,—as if the spiritual were not more *real* always than the material!

Yet when we come to a phrase like this, about which lingers strongly a quaint, or even a musty, flavour of the remote past, we must not hastily discard it as of no value. I believe that the Creed is richer for this phrase "the resurrection of the body," that we would lose something vital and valuable should we eliminate it. For in and under it are faiths and ideas still true, and still precious.

What did the men who framed the Creed mean, when they said, "I believe in the resurrection of the body"? What vital realities lay below the form of words? Here are some of the meanings; are they not real and precious to you?

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"I believe in the continuity of personal existence."

I believe not only that *life* goes on, but that I shall go on, knowing myself to be myself, carrying on those relationships and soul-processes which make up my personal life. I believe in the ongoing of self-conscious personality.

Tennyson has put in perfect form the sacred and strong conviction that underlies this archaic phrase in the Creed:

"That each, who seems a separate whole
Should move his rounds, and, fusing all
The skirts of self, again should fall,
Remerging in the general soul,—

Is faith as vague as all unsweet;
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside,
And I shall know him when we meet."

It is to guard against that "faith as vague as all unsweet," that unsatisfying idea of "remerging in the general soul," that there was put into the Creed this profession of faith in "eternal form," "the resurrection of the body." Thinkers and believers of to-day,

might word it differently; but the underlying conviction is a true and a precious one.

The phrase is a protest against the tendency to make the future life vague, impersonal, shadowy, unreal. Other religions told men that in the future they would be "shades," ghosts, something less than real. The Christian religion wants us to think of the life to come as real, vital, vivid, personal. We associate reality with flesh and blood; and therefore we say "the resurrection of the *body*," in order to confess,—all inadequately, clumsily, and childishly—our conviction that the future life will be not vaporous, but warm-blooded, not a shadow of living, but life that is life indeed.

This phrase also bears the meaning, "*I believe in the religious importance of the body, and of common, homely, earthly things.*"

Whatever that future life may be, however differentiated from the life we live in the flesh, what I do in the flesh is going to make a real and vital difference in that eternal life that is to come. It is not a wholesome tendency that has led so many Christians and so

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large a part of the Church to despise the body, to glorify celibacy, and asceticism, and a hermit-life as more religious than normal experiences and relationships. If the revelation of God in Christ teaches us one truth more obviously than another, it is that the common, normal life, the homely experiences, are most divine. This article in the Creed, outgrown in form, yet expresses a vital and necessary conviction, that the *bodily life counts in the eternal life*, that common things are the material out of which the spiritual grows. It serves notice upon me each Sunday, as I say the words, that this body of mine shares in the Christian life, its duties, its joys, its hopes, its possibilities; and that, if I am to be a right and whole Christian, I must care for my body as well as for my soul; for my body is vitally concerned with the outworking of eternal life. The New Testament abounds in expressions of such a faith. Paul urges us to present our *bodies* a living sacrifice, "which is your *spiritual* service." This article in the Creed is not far in meaning and implication from the fact that Christ told us to remember Him by eating and drinking.

To say "I believe in the resurrection of the body," is simply our way,—clumsy, archaic, but an honest, homely way,—of saying, "I believe that the life that is to come is real, vital, vivid, personal, intimately bound up with the simplest acts and facts of my daily life, physical as well as spiritual." Meaning this, it carries large implications. It avows our conviction that the care of the body and of the common life is a valid and important part of Christian duty and practice. It justifies, nay it necessitates, what we group as social service, ministry to the earthly needs of men and women and children. If we believe that the body is merely a temporary abiding place of the soul, and that souls can win eternal life just as readily from the slums and from wasted and diseased bodies as from happy homes and healthy bodies, why care very much to change present conditions? The shameful and shocking indifference of many saints to the living and working conditions of masses of people has sprung in part out of making the future life the supreme consideration, and thinking of it as depending wholly on the soul. If we believe

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that the bodies of men seriously affect their *eternal life*, we shall have a new spiritual impulse in our social service. It is through this little phrase that hospitals, and child-saving, and ministry to health and recreation, and neighbourhood service, and all the modern social program, come into vital connection with the Christian Creed. As immigrants, coming to America when mature, out of a previous environment defective and unlike our democratic life, win only by painful and long effort if at all, what their children gain with ease from growth in the right environment, so it may be that souls going into eternal life out of some hell on earth may be different through long ages because of the bodily surroundings amid which their souls grew and were formed. So this phrase, in form a stumbling-block, in spirit links the glory there with the work of the kingdom here, and confesses the eternal significance of the daily, homely, bodily life.

One more word remains in the Creed. When we say "Amen" at the end, let it be no mere sign of completion, as if we said "Selah" or "period." For that word reminds us that the Creed is a prayer. Our fathers, in their analysis and exposition of the Lord's Prayer

in the Catechism, say that "in testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard, we say 'Amen.'" To put that word at the end of the Creed should mean that, having confessed our faith, we pause a moment and solemnly say, "I mean it, every article of it; in the sight of God I confess it as the faith by which I live. God help me to make it take shape and come true in my life."

And what a life it would be! This little ancient form of words is far from setting forth all the richness of the Christian religion, all that we believe about God and Christ and life. These studies of it have been but hints of the meaning and richness of the great Christian truths on which our souls live. Yet what a glory and joy the life of any one of us would be, if he lived every day and all day in the light and power of the meanings we have discovered in these great, simple Christian truths! To live as if my life were made for me every day by infinite love; to live as if God were just like Jesus, and Jesus my only Master; to feel ever the presence and power of a spirit within me and within society which I know is God Himself living in me and in humanity; to be a loyal part of the Church and of the whole fellowship

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of believing and helpful souls here on earth and in heaven; to live in the joy of God's forgiveness, and in the tenderness of a forgiving spirit toward others; and to walk through life in the light of life eternal, sure that God cares for me, soul and body, and will not let me perish, but will bring me to Himself:—that is what it would mean to live out the mighty convictions of this Christian Creed. It would be to enter upon that "path of the just" which, though it begin like the faint light of dawn, "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." God help us not only to say it, but to mean it; to add to it continually the "amen," the faithful witness, of a life lived in the flesh by faith in the Son of God.

"O living will, that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow through our deeds, and make them pure.
That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears,
A cry above the conquered years
To One that with us works, and trust,
With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul."

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